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LIFE STORIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

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# ARNOLD OF WINKELRIED

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*LIFE STORIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE*

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ARNOLD OF WINKELRIED

## LIFE STORIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

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*Translated from the German by*  
**GEORGE P. UPTON**

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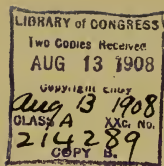
*THE Winkelried statue*  
(After a photograph by Guccione, Rome)



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## Translator's Preface

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THE story of Arnold of Winkelried, the famous hero of Switzerland, and of his heroic death in the battle of Sempach, will never lose its interest. The learned iconoclasts, having the advantage of the obscurity of fourteenth-century history, may continue to declare that he is only a legendary hero, as they have asserted of William Tell, but Winkelried, like Tell, still lives in the hearts of the Swiss people as the actual embodiment of patriotic devotion, love of freedom, and love of humanity, and thus he will remain in the hearts of men for all time. The narrative in this little volume might be called a collection of short sketches illustrating the great events of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, with Winkelried as their dominant figure and connecting link. The author tells us the legends which cluster around Pilatus, and good father Vincentius's thrilling story of the battle of Morgarten.

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## ❖ TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE ❖

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He shows us how a mystery play was performed. The ravages of the Black Death are vividly set forth. Then he tells us of the robber knights and Duke Leopold's tournament at Basle. He describes in detail the curious methods employed in storming a castle, introduces Winkelried in his daring adventure as a beggar monk, and closes the graphic story with a thrilling account of the famous Sempach battle and the way in which Winkelried gave himself to death by making a passage for the Confederates through the forest of Austrian spears. There is no nobler example of patriotic devotion and sublime courage in history.

G. P. U.

CHICAGO, May 1, 1908.

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# Contents

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CHAPTER	PAGE
I KNIGHT SCHRUTAN AND THE PILATUS . .	11
II THE BATTLE OF MORGARTEN . . . .	31
III THE MYSTERY PLAY AT ENGELBERG . .	50
IV THE BLACK DEATH . . . . .	58
V THE ROBBER KNIGHTS . . . . .	72
VI THE TOURNAMENT AT LITTLE BASLE . .	94
VII STORMING OF A LITHUANIAN CASTLE . .	108
VIII THE BEGGAR MONK . . . . .	119
IX WINKELRIED'S HEROIC DEATH . . . .	131
APPENDIX . . . . .	140

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# Illustrations

---

The Winkelried statue . . . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i>
Monument commemorating the Battle of Sempach . . . . .	54
Winkelried's heroic death at the Battle of Sempach . . . . .	122

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# Arnold of Winkelried

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## *Chapter I*

### *Knight Schrutan and the Pilatus*

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THE Lake of the Four Forest Cantons, lying amidst the four cantons, Uri, Unterwalden, Schwyz, and Lucerne, from which it derives its name, surpasses all other Swiss lakes in the grandeur of its natural beauty and in the wealth of its historical associations.

In the year 1315, which is about the period in which the events of this story occurred, there was upon this lake a little flotilla, which seems insignificant enough when compared with the powerful fleets of the present day. At that time the cantons of Uri, Schwyz, and Unterwalden were frequently engaged in hostilities with their neighbor Lucerne, which still adhered to Austria. Their encounters took place on skiffs and boats and clumsy vessels along the shores of the lake. One big, sharp-pointed, oaken craft, called the "Goose," was the flagship of the Lucerne fleet. The "Fox" was the

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## ❖ ARNOLD OF WINKELRIED ❖

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flagship of Uri. One day the Lucerne flagship ventured too near the shore and was struck by a millstone which the Unterwaldeners hurled down upon it from a watch-tower, and which so disabled it that Lucerne's naval power was virtually destroyed.

At the point where the lake makes a wide bend to the south into the very heart of the Alps lies Unterwalden, among precipitous cliffs and mountain pastures. It is a majestic sight when the mists clear away on a bright summer's morning and the Rigi, Pilatus, the rocky summits of Schwyz, and the range of mountain-peaks extending even to the distant dazzling Jungfrau and the Black Monk are revealed in the brilliant atmosphere. The name "Unterwalden" was applied to this picturesque region in modern times. It is not known what it was called in ancient times, but there can be no doubt that it was inhabited, as it contains unusually rich pasturage for animals and offers favorable opportunities for hunting and fishing.

Not far away from the lake is the little city of Stans, situated in a luxuriant garden, whose fruitfulness is unimpaired, although from the middle of November until the beginning of February the sun

is visible only in the morning between Briefenberg and the Stauffer Horn, and in the afternoon never gilds the roofs of the little place.

At the eastern extremity of the city stands, even to this day, the Winkelried house, to which we shall now introduce our readers. They must imagine themselves in the middle of the fourteenth century. Although it had ample sleeping-rooms, spacious closets, and large, gayly colored chests in which the linen and garments were kept, as well as other conveniences, a single room was the family's living apartment. A long wooden bench stood against the wall, in front of which was a large oaken table with massive feet. Some wooden chairs and a leathern arm-chair completed the furniture. Tankards, dishes, and glasses were arranged on shelves, and some silver vessels were enclosed in a beautifully carved cabinet. A holy-water ewer was fastened near the door, and a crucifix hung between the windows. Instead of a stove there was an open coal fire, into which thyme was sprinkled to diffuse a pleasant odor throughout the room. Several tiny cages were suspended from the low ceiling. The sprightly little singers which occupied them were quiet now, having gone to sleep with their heads

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## ❖ ARNOLD OF WINKELRIED ❖

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tucked under their wings, for it was evening and the room had grown dark.

A woman of middle age was seated in the easy-chair absorbed in meditation. A boy sat in her lap, and as he tenderly embraced his mother his eyes turned to the window through which he saw the moon rising over the peaks of Pilatus and the summit of the Felsenhorn, outlined like a sharp black shadow against the sky.

"Little mother," said the boy, breaking the silence, "why is that mountain called 'Pilatus'? That is the name of the Roman governor who delivered our Saviour to the Jews."

"You are right, my Arnold. The mountain was named for him," replied his mother.

"Why?" asked Arnold.

"Pontius Pilate, who was the Governor of Judea, administered the affairs of the province so corruptly that the Emperor Tiberius recalled him to Rome and shut him up in prison," said his mother. "Rather than suffer this disgrace, Pilate took his own life. As he was a self-murderer his body was thrown into the Tiber. A terrible tempest of rain and hail at once swept down upon Rome. For weeks the thunder crashed and shook the city. The

people at last decided that the storm was caused by the dead Pilate, so they took the body from the river and carried it away. But wherever they deposited it—in the Rhone or in other rivers—violent storms and tempests raged, as they had done in Rome. At last they brought the body here and threw it into the little solitary lake near the top of yonder lofty, rugged, and almost inaccessible mountain. It was then called the Pilatus Lake and at a later day the name was also given to the mountain. Before that the mountain was called Fracmont, which comes from a Latin word signifying its jagged appearance. The lake has neither inlet nor outlet. It is not increased by the rain or the snow, nor does the most intense Summer heat lower it. It does not freeze in Winter. The wind does not agitate its dark surface, but when its quiet is disturbed by human hands frightful tempests arise.”

“Does the dead Pontius Pilate who is buried there make these storms?” said Arnold.

“Yes, my child. At times he rises from the lake and sits upon a mountain-peak, and from thence stirs up the storms which spread such devastation over the country. But once there came a wandering scholar—”

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❖ ARNOLD OF WINKELRIED ❖

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“What kind of persons are those?” asked the lad.

“They are scholars who go from one school to another, pursuing their studies, now in this one, now in that. They are poor, and the ecclesiastics and other religious people whom they visit in their wanderings support them. Last Summer one of them ate at our table.”

“Was he a scholar?” asked Arnold, in great surprise; “why, he was as big as father, and had a long beard, besides.”

“Yes,” replied his mother, with a smile; “it is not unusual for these learned beggars to remain in the schools until their thirtieth year, when they sometimes get positions as under-teachers.”

“One of these travelling scholars came, you were saying,” said Arnold, thus recalling to his mother the interrupted story.

“Yes, one of them came into our neighborhood who knew how to exorcise evil spirits, and the valley people promised to pay him well if he would quiet Pilate. The student betook himself to the lake and hurled such powerful incantations at him that he promised to rest quietly in the lake upon condition that he might rise from his watery grave

one day in each year. Since that time, upon every Good Friday, Pilate leaves the lake and sits in his red robes of office as he used to do. During the remainder of the year he is quiet and invisible. But when he becomes provoked by unusual noises in the vicinity of the lake, or stones are thrown into it, then the clouds gather about the mountains, terrible storms break loose, and the lake emits fiery exhalations. On this account people are forbidden to go near the lake lest some one may ignorantly or maliciously provoke him and thereby endanger this region as well as himself."

The mother ceased. The boy gazed steadily at the mysterious mountain, at that instant illuminated by the rising moon and gleaming like silver in its snowy drapery.

"Do you know anything more about Pilatus?" he asked, after a little.

"No, my darling, I have told you all that people say about it."

The story greatly excited Arnold. He wanted to hear more of the same thrilling kind. A dim recollection of an extraordinary adventure connected with his own family rose in his mind.

"Little mother," he said, "what was that horrible

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## ❖ ARNOLD OF WINKELRIED ❖

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animal which once lived in this region? I heard you tell about it once, but I have forgotten most of the story. I know that a knight called Winkelried killed it."

"That was Henry of Winkelried, your grandfather, usually called 'Schrutan.'"

"Why Schrutan?"

"The name was probably given to him by his companions in the tournaments; for like all knights he was fond of tilting."

"If my grandfather was a knight, why are there no knights now?" asked Arnold, raising his head from his mother's shoulder and gazing at her earnestly.

"The times have greatly changed," she replied. "Once the powerful family of Hohenstaufen<sup>1</sup> ruled over the German Empire. It occupied the throne more than a hundred years. The emperors fought many great battles, and the Winkelrieds, who were in their service, were elevated to knighthood. But when the Hohenstaufens ceased to rule, an evil time ensued. As it was no longer an honor to be

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<sup>1</sup> The Hohenstaufens were a princely German family, whose castle was at Hohenstaufen in Würtemberg. It furnished sovereigns to Germany and Sicily in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The last of them was Conradin, who was executed in 1268.



a knight, the Winkelrieds discarded knighthood and lived like plain country people."

"And what is it about the terrible animal and my grandfather who was called Knight Schrutan?" said Arnold.

"Listen," said his mother, as she began to tell him the story once more. "You know the little village of Odwylen, between Stans and the Kernwald. In the mountains near it there is a vast cavern which is said to have been occupied by heathens in the ancient days. Perhaps they were the old Romans who took refuge there because they had committed crimes and been banished from their own country. About a century ago a huge dragon had its lair in this cavern. It killed both men and beasts. The people of the little village, which is called Wylen to this day, had to flee, and as it was forsaken and desolate it took the name of Odwylen.<sup>1</sup> Along the roads which lead across the moors and meadows between Stans and Sarnen to the little village, not a person could be seen, nor were any animals pastured there, for the dragon concealed itself in the swamps and attacked every living thing. To be safe from the monster they laid out new roads, traces of which

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<sup>1</sup> "Ode," in German, signifies a desert or wilderness.

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## ❖ ARNOLD OF WINKELRIED ❖

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are visible even to-day. The people of Unterwalden sometimes undertook to attack the dragon, but it was always on the alert, and as soon as it discovered its enemies it retreated to the mountain cavern or some other place where it could defy pursuit. It was so agile that it could run up the steepest mountain-side as swiftly as a lizard and as easily as if it were on level ground. Knight Schrutan heard about this dragon. He was no longer in his own country, for in his wrath he had slain an Unterwaldener who had wronged him, and he had been banished for it. He requested permission to attack the dragon, asking no other compensation than the remission of his penalty of exile. Being a valiant knight, the Unterwaldeners granted his petition and allowed him to return home. The knight made a long spear with a sharp spike for its tip, and at once sought the dragon, which he was not long in finding. When the monster saw that it had to deal with but one man, it rushed upon him with open jaws. Knight Schrutan hurled the spear with all his strength into its throat, where the spike held it securely. Then he drew his sword and smote the dragon until, bleeding from numerous wounds, it died in terrible convulsions."

Arnold scarcely breathed during the story, so spellbound was he. At last a deep sigh escaped him. He slid down from his mother's lap and stood before her with his arms crossed, impatiently awaiting her next words, for he knew the story was not yet finished. He was sure there was something else, but could not remember what it was. His mother continued :

“ When the knight saw that his task was complete and successful he raised both arms and praised God for His personal assistance. But, alas ! he kept his sword in his hand and the poisonous blood of the dragon dripped upon the unprotected parts of his body. A few days afterwards the valiant hero died, mourned by all the people of that region, whom he had rescued from the ravages of the cruel monster.”

Arnold stood lost in thought as his mother brought the story to an end. Had his brave ancestor gone forth to battle, and had he returned victorious, and been overwhelmed with gold and honors by the grateful Unterwaldeners it would not have been half so inspiring to the lad as this tragic fate of the hero who paid for his brave deed with his life. Young as he was, he too longed to

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## ❖ ARNOLD OF WINKELRIED ❖

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achieve something great and bequeath to others a legacy of glorious memories. The spark of self-sacrifice was kindled at that instant in the boy's breast, not to be extinguished except with his last breath.

"Little mother," cried Arnold, with glowing cheeks, "I will be such a knight!"

His mother smiled, but made no reply. She knew the Winkelrieds' love of freedom. She knew, also, how different it was from the conceptions of freedom in the days of chivalry, and she was sure that Arnold's was the true Winkelried love. She had long been aware of the boy's heroic spirit, but she had never thought of him as an armed warrior in the field.

That night Arnold dreamed of nothing but Pilatus, the Knight Schrutan, and the dragon, and they were mingled together in the strangest manner. He dreamed he was on Lake Pilatus and saw the knight engaged in a desperate struggle with the dragon. Nearer and more near the hero forced the monster to the water's edge, and with one last desperate effort he drove it into the gloomy lake, which rose high above the sinking reptile. The sky was instantly overspread with black clouds.

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## ❖ KNIGHT SCHRUTAN ❖

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The region was enveloped in darkness, and, accompanied by deafening crashes of thunder, Pilate rose from the lake in his red robes, holding in his hand a spear set with sharp spikes, and making menacing gestures at the knight. Schrutan plunged into the lake without hesitation, and notwithstanding his heavy armor, breasted the waves with strong arms, prepared to struggle with the evil spirit. Before he could reach him, however, the water changed to dragon's blood in which the knight was overwhelmed.

On the next day, Florian Häbli, Arnold's friend and playmate, came to see him. Notwithstanding Florian's father was poor and had to earn a living for his large family by fishing and felling trees, Arnold preferred him to all the other boys, and admired his courage, though Florian sometimes was bolder in words than in action. The two boys at first indulged in a vigorous snowball fight. Then they made a snow man, and when it was finished, Arnold placed a hat upon its head. As this reminded him of the cloud caps which at times covered the summit of Pilatus, he called the snow man the wicked Pontius Pilate, and bade Florian help him to destroy Pilate. Both lads began a fierce bombardment of the snow man, and kept it up until it

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## ❖ ARNOLD OF WINKELRIED ❖

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was reduced to a shapeless mass. Then Arnold told Florian about Schrutan and his adventure; and he said he would like to encounter a dragon, but unfortunately there were no more of them in that neighborhood.

"Do you really mean to say that you, such a little fellow, would really fight a dragon?" rather contemptuously replied Florian, who was half a head taller than Arnold. "Why, it would bury you in the cavity of one of its teeth."

Arnold, with equal contempt, answered back: "You shall yet see what I will do. And I shall not kill a dragon," he said, with a glance at the fragments of the snow man. "The wicked Pilate is up there in the lake. He sends storms over the land, which destroy the crops just as the dragon killed men and beasts. He rises from the lake every Good Friday, and then we can attack him."

"Have you the courage to do it?" said Florian, incredulously.

"Yes, I have," replied Arnold, in a manner so serious that Florian was deeply impressed. He stated the perils of such an undertaking to his companion, and also informed him that no one was allowed to go near the banks of the lake. But

Arnold was not to be dissuaded from his purpose. He replied by setting forth with such enthusiasm the duty of some one to perform the heroic deed of ridding the region of the evil spirit that Florian resolved not to be outdone by his brave comrade. He decided on the spot to accompany him on his dangerous expedition, and to help him to overcome Pilate. The two lads talked of nothing else from day to day, and carefully guarded their secret. Florian agreed to all the details of the plan and worked them out assiduously. Most of his time was spent in devising the weapons they should use. He was eager to construct a catapult, like those used to batter down the walls of fortresses, but found it impossible. Then he considered other methods of attack. He thought of Greek fire, but he did not know how to make it. At last he thought of a thunder-machine, for he had heard that these machines, by some mysterious force, could hurl great iron balls. But as all his plans proved impracticable, he next began to devise methods of protection against the enemy's attack which would make up for the lack of these terrible weapons, — such as an invulnerable coat of mail, or some wonderful ointment which could be rubbed on the

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## ❖ ARNOLD OF WINKELRIED ❖

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body from head to foot, and make the skin as hard as horn.

Arnold listened to all of Florian's suggestions without making any reply. He had long since settled the whole matter himself. His courage was sufficient armor for him, and his weapon was the simple sling, with which David smote the giant Goliath. He was sure he could overcome Pilate if he had a fair chance, and to make sure of it he practised with the sling until he became so expert that he could hit any mark within stone's throw.

The two little adventurers impatiently awaited the spring-time, which would bring Holy Week and the eventful day. The mountains took on fresh tints. The sky was gorgeously colored, and the atmosphere so transparent that the most distant mountains seemed near by. There was a certain relaxation in the air and a peculiar rustle in the woods. The dwellers in the valley went around anxiously and extinguished the fire on every hearth, for these manifestations of nature were the harbingers of the violent Föhn. This dreadful wind (the Föhn) sweeps down from the mountains upon the valleys, but gentle Spring follows in its train. The Föhn melts the Winter snows even more



rapidly than the sun, on which account it is called the "snow-eater," and its warm breath imparts new life to the grasses and buds.

The valley was already clothed in tender green when Good Friday came. On that eventful morning, armed only with his sling, Arnold and his companion-at-arms set out for Lake Pilatus. Arnold did not know the way, but Florian was familiar with it. His godfather, Peter Ruttimer, whose duty it was to keep strangers away from it, had sometimes taken Florian with him, so that he knew the road, and now and then had even been near the lake.

After a troublesome and painful tramp of several hours, climbing up steep places on all fours, and frequently stopping to rest, the venturesome lads reached the accursed water, enclosed all round with gloomy forests. Florian would have greatly preferred to abandon the expedition, of which he was growing very tired, and visit his godfather; but Arnold's cool contempt of every danger deeply impressed him and strengthened his wavering courage.

There was not a ripple on that gloomy water; not a trace of Pilate, who should have been sitting

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## ❖ ARNOLD OF WINKELRIED ❖

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there in his official robes, was to be seen. Florian, after all, was right when he said that Pilate would not allow any one to see him.

“You see, he does not come,” whispered Florian, after they had waited a long time.

“He will come yet,” replied Arnold; and to expedite the wished-for moment he picked up a large stone, and before Florian could stop him, hurled it into the lake with all his might. It struck with a great splash. With a loud outcry, brave Florian took to his heels and ran away as fast as he could.

Arnold, however, was not in the least disturbed. After waiting a little while, he sent Pilate a second invitation. He repeated it a dozen times, making longer pauses between the throws so as to give him time to consider it. His efforts were useless. He could not even rouse the sluggish water into activity again. But he did not mind that, for he was certain that Pilate was in the lake. At last he decided that more energetic measures were necessary to entice him to the surface. He arranged for a general bombardment by collecting a veritable arsenal of stones. When he had piled them up in a small pyramid he began operations. He hurled one stone after another into the lake and kept up the assault

with such vigor that the sweat poured down his face. But Pilate treated these unprecedented insults with silent contempt. While Arnold was making preparations to renew the bombardment, for which he was collecting fresh ammunition, he heard footsteps rapidly approaching. Turning round, he saw the powerful figure of Peter Ruttimer, and Florian, who had turned informer, by his side.

The guardian of Pilatus had already thrown up his hands in dismay when he noticed that the water of the lake had been disturbed by some one throwing stones. White with rage, he rushed after the malefactor. Little he cared that that malefactor's ancestor was a knight. He would have liked to give him a sound whipping on the spot, but refrained, fearing that Arnold would make an outcry which would only add another offence to his disobedience of orders; so he contented himself by hissing out the maledictions which herdsmen employ when their animals are refractory, after which he drove both boys down the mountain. He would have had the legal penalty imposed upon Arnold had not his godson also been concerned in the offence.

Nearly two hundred and fifty years later, imitators

of these boys went to the lake. Johann Müller, the Lucerne magistrate, climbed to the notorious spot with many others. They shouted to Pilate to arise from his watery grave, and they threw stones into the lake; but neither Pilate nor the tempest appeared. Some walked into the water to see if it was bottomless or would emit fiery exhalations, as was the general belief. Several years later the lake was drained,—only an ugly and dangerous morass remaining. The herdsmen, however, did not give up their belief in the legend. For a long time an old custom prevailed among them of shouting an incantation every evening through their milk-funnels to prevent Pilate from harming them or their animals during the night.

## Chapter II

### *The Battle of Morgarten*

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**A**BOUT ten miles distant from Stans, and high above the glistening Lake of the Four Forest Cantons, is a somewhat long valley, about three miles in width, surrounded by huge mountains, among which the Titlis is the loftiest. A pastoral village occupies the right bank of the Aar,<sup>1</sup> which furnishes it with fresh spring water. Both the valley and the village take the name of Engelberg<sup>2</sup> from the Benedictine monastery, established there in 1120. Its founder was the wealthy and childless Baron Conrad of Seldenbüren. He gave the valley, which was one of his possessions, to the monastery, besides endowing it with valuable property in Zurichgau. "Engelberg" is the equivalent of the Latin name, "Mons Angelorum," which Pope Calixtus the Second gave to the monastery.

<sup>1</sup> The Aar, or Aare, rises in the Bernese Oberland and flows into the Rhine. Its length is about 170 miles.

<sup>2</sup> Engelberg is now a health resort in the Canton of Unterwalden, Switzerland, south of Lucerne. It still has a Benedictine Abbey.

The entire valley was tributary to the monastery. Every household had to furnish it a Shrovetide fowl or thirty eggs. When a valley person died, his heir had to give the monastery the best pair of cattle left by the deceased, as well as the clothes he last wore to church. Twice a year the Abbot went to the castle at Zurichgau, belonging to the monastery, to administer justice. Eight days previous to the journey, those of the same rank and fief, and belonging to the same order, between the Reuss and the Rhine, were invited to accompany him. The Abbot, on these journeys also took his chaplain, a provost, a priest in ordinary, and a knight with three hounds and a hawk. When the Abbot stopped at a house, the housewife had to receive him at her door, with a loaf in one hand and a fowl in the other, the fowl being for the hawk and the loaf for the hounds. She must also provide a roast, a sufficient number of fowls, and enough of good Alsatian wine for the dinner of the Abbot and his company, and if he remained over night, the farm attached to the place had also to furnish fowl.

Berthold of Winkelried was abbot at the time of our story, and his two sisters, Adelheid and Elspeth, were in charge of the convent, which was also located

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## ❖ BATTLE OF MORGARTEN ❖

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in the valley. As the brother and sisters were near relatives of Arnold, our hero, he was sent to the famous school of the Benedictine monastery to acquire his education and to become thoroughly acquainted with the history of the fatherland, and thereby acquire the inspiration of its struggles and heroic deeds.

The original sources of this history are lost in the traditions of the past. The first inhabitants of Switzerland probably were the Rætians. They were followed by the Helvetians, a Celtic tribe which occupied the plains, leaving the Rætians only the mountains. Both these tribes were subjugated by the Romans in the first century of our era, who laid out the first roads and established settlements. Eastern Switzerland was assigned to the Rætians, who belonged to Italy, and western to the Gauls. The name "Helvetia" disappeared in the third century. When the great migrations occurred, which built up new empires and pulled down old ones, the fierce Huns first invaded the country. Following them, the Burgundians conquered the western part, whereupon the Ostrogoths took possession of the southern and the Alamanni of the northern part. All these tribes

in turn were subjugated by the Franks,<sup>1</sup> who not only overran the country, but established Frankish advowsons there. Although the Alpine people were subject to them yet they retained a certain independence, and Charles the Great granted them many privileges, for they had rendered him important service in his Italian wars. After the dissolution of the great Frankish empire the eastern part of Switzerland was acquired by the Duchy of Swabia and the western by the newly organized kingdom of Burgundy. Subsequent to this, the German sovereigns took over the country and permitted the house of Züringen to administer it. During the reign of the Emperor Frederick the Second (1215-1250) the Swiss were subordinate to the Empire and free from the exactions of the landowners, but after the extinction of the Hohenstaufen dynasty, the imperial power declined. Ecclesiastics and non-ecclesiastics, counts, and princes sought to in-

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<sup>1</sup> Rætia was a province of the Roman Empire, and its inhabitants were mountaineers. It was conquered by Tiberius in 15 B. C. The Helvetians were a Celtic tribe living near Lake Geneva, and were conquered by Cæsar. The Huns were a Mongolian race which invaded Europe in the fourth century. Their greatest leader was Attila. The Ostrogoths were the Eastern branch of the Gothic race, and were subjugated by the Huns. The Alamanni were a German race, whose territory in the third century included Alsace and part of Eastern Switzerland. "Franks" was a name assumed by a confederation of German tribes.



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## ❖ BATTLE OF MORGARTEN ❖

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crease their possessions and revenues at the expense of their neighbors ; and the Swiss cities, as well as the country people, who had previously resisted thralldom, were forced to protect themselves by making individual alliances with their oppressors. Thus it happened that Zurich and Uri united with the counts of Hapsburg. Schwyz made another alliance. When Count Rudolph of Hapsburg<sup>1</sup> was elected to the imperial throne, 1273, he endeavored to enlarge his possessions. Several Swiss cities which had been loyal to the Hapsburgs and had fought so stoutly in Rudolph's campaigns began to fear for their own security ; but in the last year of Rudolph's life (1291) the men of Schwyz, Uri, and Unterwalden met and organized "the Everlasting League," under the provisions of which they agreed to protect each other from a common enemy. They also agreed to recognize no local officials who had bought their positions or who were strangers in the country. Following their example, the people of every valley and community made the same agreement.

What the death of the Emperor Rudolph had prevented him from accomplishing, Albert, his son

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<sup>1</sup> Rudolph the First was the son of Albert the Fourth, Count of Hapsburg. He succeeded his father in 1239, and was elected German king in 1273, being the first of the Hapsburg line.

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## ❖ ARNOLD OF WINKELRIED ❖

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and successor, sought to carry out. He aimed to dominate the country and make its free people his vassals. When at last his tyranny was too severe for endurance, three men from the three cantons, Werner Stauffacher of Schwyz, Walter Fürst of Uri, and Arnold of Melchthal, and thirty more with them, met at the Rütli,<sup>1</sup> and renewed the League of 1291. Two months after this, the tyrannical governors were expelled, their brutal rule was ended, and the country was free.

Duke Albert, thirsting for revenge, sought to destroy the League, but while striving to accomplish that purpose he was murdered by his nephew, Duke John of Swabia. The German imperial power was supplanted by that of the Austrian dukes. Henry, the next emperor, was chosen from the Luxembourg and Bavarian family. He recognized the League and confirmed the people in all their rights and privileges, which subjected him to the ill-will of Albert's sons and grandsons. After Henry's death Louis of Bavaria was elected Emperor over Frederick of Austria. The Forest Cantons paid allegiance to him because they knew they had

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<sup>1</sup> The Rütli was a meadow in the mountains of Uri, fifteen miles southeast of Lucerne.

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## ❖ BATTLE OF MORGARTEN ❖

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nothing good to expect from Austria. Thereupon Leopold, Frederick's brother, decided to retaliate, and nearly all the nobles of Swabia and German Switzerland joined him.

The events now to be related, which took place in 1315, Arnold learned from the lips of an aged monk in the Engelberg monastery, who had been a participant in them. This still vigorous old man, Father Vincentius, was known throughout the valley as the "one-eyed," for he had lost his left eye. He was not a man of great erudition, but having had experience in the art of healing he knew how to compound medicines for the sick, and to treat wounds and broken limbs. He was revered and loved by the pastoral folk of the valley, for many of them owed their good health and their lives to his skill. As he was always ready, by day or by night, in good or in bad weather, to visit sick-beds, he was looked upon as an angel of mercy. Father Vincentius had been wild and reckless in his youth, but in his later years he returned to the Church and consecrated himself as a Benedictine monk to the service of suffering humanity. Arnold was very fond of the monk, and his devotion was returned by Father Vincentius, who occasionally took the lad

with him on his visits to the sick. Upon one of these visits, which took them to the end of the valley, the monk told him about the war which Leopold waged against the three cantons.

“In November of the year 1315,” he began, “Leopold assembled a large force at Zug, composed of the flower of the nobility and his own horsemen. There were also many foot soldiers from Lucerne, Entlebuch, Aargau, Oberhasli, Frutigen, and other places in the hill country. His plan was to have the entire cavalry and part of the infantry make the main attack upon Schwyz. This force numbered fifteen thousand men, and the Duke himself was leader. The remaining infantry, six thousand strong, commanded by the Austrian marshal, Count Otto of Strasburg, was to invade Unterwalden — one division attacking the Nidwald by land and water, the other the Obwald,<sup>1</sup> so as to divide and weaken their opponents as much as possible.

“Two highroads led from Zug to Schwyz, but the Schwyzers were uncertain which of them the Duke’s army would take. When they found at last that they were menaced by such an overpowering

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<sup>1</sup> Nidwald is the northern part of the Canton of Unterwalden ; Oberwald is the southern part.

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## ❖ BATTLE OF MORGARTEN ❖

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force they became somewhat alarmed. They had made tenders of peace to Leopold through Count Frederick of Toggenburg, who was well disposed toward them, but the furious Leopold would not consider the offers, so that no alternative was left them but to defend themselves to the last drop of their blood. They summoned all their people to arms and fortified the principal passes and roads of their little country. They thoroughly strengthened Arth, a post station at the southeast corner of the Lake of Zug, where it makes a bend, for at that point, as at Lucerne, they might be attacked by land and water. They constructed strong and well protected entrenchments, extending from the Rossberg to the Rigi. If the enemy should break through at any one point the entire defence might be lost, so particular care was paid to the entrenchments. As there were frequent skirmishes between the Schwyzers and the Austrians at Saint Adrian, it was thought the main attack would be made there, and that Leopold's army might be expected on the road to Arth. These skirmishes proved to be the first step toward the subsequent success of the Confederates. Among the Austrian liegemen from Lucerne and Zug there were many who sympathized

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## ❖ ARNOLD OF WINKELRIED ❖

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with their neighbors and who were serving in the Duke's army under constraint. One of these was Henry of Hünenberg, who had friends and relatives among the Schwyzers. He determined to give his old friends some valuable information. A favorable chance offered itself in one of these encounters. During its progress he rushed up to the entrenchment and shot an arrow over it, which lodged in a tree. A Schwyzer, noticing that a paper was wrapped round it, pulled it out. The paper contained the brief but significant message, 'Defend yourselves at Morgarten.'

"Now they were sure where the attack would be made. The Duke chose for his advance that one of the two roads that leads to the rocky ridge known as the Morgarten, and by way of Stein directly to Schwyz. Every effort was made to give the enemy a vigorous reception. The Morgarten is a natural defence of itself. At the upper part of it extends a plain called the 'Alte Matte,' intersected by a mountain ridge. This runs to the Morgarten and presents an admirable opportunity for attacking an army approaching through the pass upon the flank, or to cut him off entirely. In making their plans, they followed the counsels of Rudolf Reding, who

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## ❖ BATTLE OF MORGARTEN ❖

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had fought in many of his country's battles in his younger life, and now had the valuable experience of seventy years.

"On the evening of November fifteenth their companions from Uri and Unterwalden arrived in Schwyz. Their numbers all told were thirteen hundred — six hundred from Schwyz, four hundred from Uri, and three hundred from Unterwalden. The rest of their men were engaged in holding important places among the passes. As night came on, the little army took up its march to Morgarten, determined to conquer, or, like Leonidas and his Spartans, die for freedom and the fatherland.

"On the following day Duke Leopold left Zug with his fifteen thousand men early in the morning. After a council with his leaders at the village church of Ober Ägeri on the way, he decided to make the attack the next morning. The Confederates in the meantime, following Reding's advice, did not remain on the mountain ridge, but crossed the Alte Matte to Haslern, so that Morgarten was on their right and the little Lake Ägeri, extending to the southeastern slope of Morgarten, on their left.

"The Confederates suddenly found an unexpected and even unwelcome reinforcement, though it was but a mere handful of men."

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## ❖ ARNOLD OF WINKELRIED ❖

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Father Vincentius paused in his story, apparently absorbed in a reverie, which his little auditor did not venture to disturb though he longed to know how the impending battle came out. The old man muttered a few inaudible words to himself and nodded his head twice. At last he resumed:

“You must know, my son, that the government of the Confederates was severe in its administration of law and authority. Whoever disobeyed the law or disturbed the public peace in any way was severely punished. It is so now, and it has always been so. There were some young, hot-headed fellows who thought it was their mission to reform the world, and as one alone could not do it, they formed societies for that purpose, which became dangerous political parties to the State and the community. Such fellows as these were always expelled from the country. Just about the time of which I am talking a number of young men had suffered this penalty for violation of the law; but when they heard of the danger which threatened the fatherland, the old home-love was aroused, and fifty of them started for the Schwyz frontier to serve their country. They sent messengers to the Confederates, asking permission to serve in the ranks of



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## ❖ BATTLE OF MORGARTEN ❖

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their countrymen, but their service was declined and the messengers were rudely dismissed. I can confirm this, for I was one of those messengers. Yes, my son, I was one of the exiles. I was one of those heaven-stormers, before I became Father Vincentius. Although our offer of help was rejected we still loved the fatherland, and so we fifty determined to fight for it by ourselves. We knew where to find the enemy, and, unknown to any one, we went to the Morgarten and took up a position on the ridge to the right, called Mattligütsch—it was early in the morning of November sixteenth. In very early times a slide had been made there for sending down the firewood cut for the Winter. There were plenty of logs at hand, which could be rolled down upon the passing enemy with terrible effect, and we also collected an ample supply of rocks and boulders. A dense fog hung over Lake Ägeri and its shores, through which we suddenly heard drum-beats and trumpet-calls in the distance. Leopold's army was approaching, with the fifteen hundred nobles of Swabia, Alsatia, Aargau, and Thurgau, heavily armed, led by Duke Leopold himself, and Count Henry of Montfort-Tettnung in the advance, the infantry bringing up the rear.

“Just then the fog lifted and the sun rose. Brightly gleamed the polished steel armor and helms gayly adorned with many-colored plumes, and the dense forest of spears flashed in the dazzling light. It was a fascinating and awe-inspiring spectacle, but it only strengthened our courage all the more. We calmly awaited our opportunity, entirely unobserved by the enemy. As the cavalry, little recking of any danger, advanced through the narrow pass between the Mattligütsch and Lake Ägeri we let loose a tremendous avalanche of logs and tree trunks, followed by a hail-storm of rocks. They were at once plunged into frightful disorder. Many men and horses were felled to the earth and crushed. The terrified steeds, almost as heavily weighed down as their riders, reared and threw them. Count Montfort and other leaders attempted to restore order and resume the march, but we gave them no time. We hurled rocks and logs into their ranks incessantly and their panic increased every moment. Though barely able to extricate themselves, some rode back and urged the rear ranks forward. But the enemy was overcome with terror. Threats and imprecations mingled with groans and screams on all sides. The commands of their leaders were not even respected.

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## ❖ BATTLE OF MORGARTEN ❖

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“In the first moment of their rage at this unexpected obstruction to their march, several horsemen made a rash attempt to ride along the Haselmatt, where they thought they would be least exposed to our assault, and a part of the vanguard followed them. Observing this movement we redoubled our exertions, and most of them were crushed as they were toilsomely ascending. We charged upon those who escaped, and it was then my eye was put out by the thrust of a lance.

“The thirteen hundred confederates at Haslern, who had heard the tumult and din of arms, suddenly came up and attacked the cavalry. Their clubs, spears, and swords made frightful havoc, and they dealt such stout blows with their halberds that even the heaviest armed foe could not have withstood them. Hundreds struggled in the stream of blood, filled with demoniac rage, and many were wounded by them in their blind fury or were trampled upon by their horses. Some were so paralyzed by fear that they made no attempt to defend themselves, and were killed. Those who managed to extricate themselves took to flight. Several dived into Lake Ägeri, where most of them were drowned because of their heavy armor. Leopold's horsemen, who

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## ❖ ARNOLD OF WINKELRIED ❖

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rode along so gallantly and proudly only a short time before were now killed or fugitives. While the great battle-horns of Uri and Unterwalden were sounding their blasts of victory, the flying horsemen encountered the foot-soldiers just coming up. As they did not turn aside quickly enough, the latter were trodden underfoot by the wild horses. Among the fugitives were the Count of Montfort and Leopold. The Duke, usually a brave soldier, furiously galloped miles away to Winterthur,<sup>1</sup> although no one was pursuing him; such was his consternation over his surprising defeat.

At last we met the terrified and panic-stricken ranks of the foot-soldiers, but among them were men from Zurich and Zug, who fought like lions. But they were doomed, for who could withstand the impetuosity of the Schwyzers, whose like was only to be found among the old German conquerors of the Romans. Like grass before the scythe these picked men of Zurich and Zug fell in heaps where they stood. Surely, heroism like this was worthy of a better cause! The other foot-soldiers fled to the adjacent mountains, and at nine o'clock the battle of Morgarten was over.

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<sup>1</sup> Winterthur, one of the chief manufacturing towns in Switzerland, about thirteen miles northeast of Zurich.

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## ❖ BATTLE OF MORGARTEN ❖

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“The victors could not afford to follow the fugitives, for during the battle messengers had been sent from Unterwalden calling for help. In pursuance of their plan of battle Count Otto of Strasburg had made the attack on Unterwalden with his six thousand men. Our division made its approach in boats on the Lake of the Four Forest Cantons, and as the few defenders of the shore-line were powerless to prevent them, they destroyed everything in their way throughout the entire Nidwald. The other division, led by the Count, invaded the Obwald and ravaged it with the rapacity of a flock of wolves. After the enemy's main force had been routed at Morgarten, the Unterwaldeners went at once to the relief of their own hard pressed countrymen and hundreds of stout Schwyzers accompanied them. They first rescued the Nidwaldeners from their unbidden guests, recovered the spoils, and drove them to their boats in such haste that many of them fell into the water and were drowned. Then they moved against the Strasburg force, which they found at Alpnach. As the Austrian count saw the Unterwaldeners approaching he was seized with a panic, which spread through his entire army; for he knew that the Unterwaldeners were at Morgarten and rightly

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## ❖ ARNOLD OF WINKELRIED ❖

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concluded that the Duke's army had been defeated. The Strasburgers lost courage and began retreating without even offering resistance. But some of them failed to escape, for the rear column was overtaken and several hundred were killed.

"Thus in one day the Confederates achieved a three-fold victory over an army which was sixteen times as strong as their own, and which lost fifteen hundred horsemen and as many foot-soldiers. The loss of the Confederates was small, but three of their bravest leaders were found among the dead. Horses, costly weapons, rider and horse equipment, ten banners, many decorated helmets such as the nobility wear to distinguish them from others, were among the rich spoils captured. Permission was granted to those among the enemy who had dead relatives on the field to take their bodies home. The rest were buried on the spot. The wounded were treated with special kindness. We who had made the first assault and prepared the way for victory were allowed to remain in the homeland, and it was sacred to us ever after."

Such is the story of the battle at Morgarten as the monk, who had participated in the events of that memorable day, related it to the lad. Arnold

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## ❖ BATTLE OF MORGARTEN ❖

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gazed with admiration upon this old man who had once fought so stoutly and now went about in his sandals and black cowl as a messenger of peace. He looked with a kind of reverential awe at the blinded eye, and the scar seemed to him a mark of honor and victory.

Arnold had always loved his country, but now he was deeply moved by a feeling of pride as he thought of the skill and courage which had characterized the deeds of his countrymen, and his heart glowed with the fire of patriotism. His most ardent wish was to distinguish himself by his devotion to home and freedom, to swing the halberd in the hot fight, and to drive the enemy from the fatherland. He no longer wished to be a knight.

## Chapter III

### *The Mystery Play at Engelberg*

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THE monasteries in those days were the nurseries of the arts and sciences. The German stage also owes its origin to them. The so-called "mystery plays" originated in church ceremonials representing the Passion of Christ, and were intended to familiarize the people with the events narrated by the Evangelists. They were given in a semi-musical way by various ecclesiastics. One spoke the narrative parts, another the words of the Saviour, a third all the words of the remaining personages, and the chorus recited those of the people and priests. These plays were performed at the monastery of Engelberg, where young Arnold was studying, with all the scenic display possible at that time.

As the Easter festival drew nigh the men of the valley came with hammers and hatchets and built a large stage upon an open place near the monastery, where the life of the Saviour from His birth to His resurrection was to be represented before a vast con-



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## ❖ THE MYSTERY PLAY ❖

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course of spectators assembled from far and near. The stage was open on all sides, for they knew nothing about wings or curtains in those days. The play lasted an entire day. The players were monks and students; but as their number was too small because bystanders and crowds of people were necessary to the performance, intelligent outsiders were called in to help. Upon this account German was generally used in place of the earlier Latin text.

When everything was in readiness the performers entered and occupied a large semicircle of seats, after which the customary blessing was invoked. The man chorus pronounced the "Veni sancte Spiritus," after which two students sang the "Emitte Spiritum." They were dressed to represent angels, with wings on their shoulders; and in this guise the little Arnold, the great war hero of after days, took part in the sacred performance.

The angels as well as Christ and his apostles wore the mediæval costumes of that time. The risen Christ was clad in the official garments of a bishop — the dalmatic and the red chasuble. He also wore a crown and carried a cross and banner. This costume was intended to express the perpetuity of

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## ❖ ARNOLD OF WINKELRIED ❖

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His episcopal authority as supreme head of the church. Next appeared Saint Augustine as herald or narrator. He called the assemblage to order, pointed out the persons sitting around, explaining who each one was, and introduced the play with a pious address. In the course of his remarks he interested the audience with digressions from the story and explanations of the significance of individual events.

Whenever a player was to appear in a scene he rose from his seat, but returned to it as soon as he had finished. For instance, Jesus went to John to be baptized and then took His seat again. Nearly all the events of the life and passion of the Saviour were represented in this way, and each important scene was followed by the chorus, in Latin. King Herod's followers were in his immediate vicinity and behind them stood the servants who led John the Baptist to prison. At first the apostles were distributed about the stage, and the Master was obliged to go from one to the other and gather them together when He ordered them to follow Him. The Jewish people and their priests occupied a place set apart for them; and whenever Jesus wished to communicate with them, or to instruct

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## ❖ THE MYSTERY PLAY ❖

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them how to heal the blind, the dumb, the lepers, and the cripples, He had to go to them. Upon the awakening of Lazarus, at Jesus's entrance into Jerusalem, and in some other scenes the people flocked to Him.

All the women mentioned in the sacred story were represented by monks and students. Various services were required of the angels. They had to demand order with the words "Silentium habete," to perform many interpolated sacred songs, and to sing certain strophes explaining scenes that had not been described by the narrator, but which were arranged for music. It was also part of their duty to make changes necessitated by the stage conditions, and to explain the situation clearly. The palsied man was in bed, and when Jesus bade him arise he took his bed with him. The severed head of John was brought upon the stage. The foot-washing was literally represented. When the Saviour entered Jerusalem, both the ass upon which He rode and the palm-branches which the people strewed along the way, were provided. Everything connected with the death of Jesus, from the purple mantle and crown of thorns to the lance and the sponge, was used. The crowing of the cock, when

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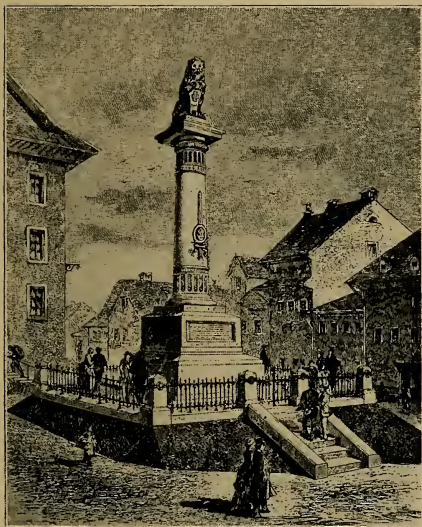
## ❖ ARNOLD OF WINKELRIED ❖

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Peter denied his Master, was imitated, as well as the thunder and the rising of the dead. A table covered with food and drink served for Herod's banquet, before which the boy who represented Herodias danced ; it served also for the supper at Simon's, when the repentant Magdalen came to the Saviour, and for the Last Supper. The tombs of Lazarus and Christ, John's prison, and the house of Martha and Lazarus were represented, as well as the pinnacle of the temple to which Satan led our Lord, and the Mount of Olives, set with exotic plants.

While the Chorus sang, living pictures were exhibited. They represented old Biblical events relating to the preceding scenes, so as to show the close connection of Old and New Testament occurrences. Sometimes events were artistically interwoven : While Jesus prayed on the Mount of Olives, Judas was making his treacherous bargain with the priests ; and while Pontius Pilate was conducting the trial of Jesus, in another scene Peter was denying the Lord.

To relieve the serious treatment of the subject, pleasant interludes were devised for the entertainment of the audience, showing various contrasts of



*MONUMENT commemorating  
the Battle of Sempach*



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## ❖ THE MYSTERY PLAY ❖

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life, so that smiles might follow tears. Satan appeared clad in a wolf-skin, with mighty horns and long tail, and must have presented a ludicrous sight. A merry fellow announced the arrival of the three wise men sent by Herod, and made fun of the timid sovereign who was afraid of a Child. Then he entered again with the derisive announcement that the three wise men would not go back, and a third time to say that the Holy Child would be represented in the temple. Every time he came in Herod would get enraged and threaten to hang him for making fun of a king. Another curious scene was that in which Peter smote off Malchus's ear after the seizure of Christ. Malchus wofully exclaims: "Alas! what an outrage; what a shame! I have lost my ear. They will call me a fool."

Thereupon Christ said to Peter: "Put up your sword, or you will not be safe, for those who seek revenge with the sword will perish by it." Then He turned to the Jews and said: "Bring the man to me. I will replace his ear."

After Malchus's ear was put on, he said to one of his friends: "Tell me truly about my ear. See if it is on securely, for it aches very badly."

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## ❖ ARNOLD OF WINKELRIED ❖

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After examining it carefully, the friend assured him it was all right.

Then Malchus expressed his gratitude to the Lord, after remarking: "Jesus is a very good man; He knows how to put on ears."

Before the three Marys went to the sepulchre a man entered, dressed in the ordinary costume of the time, who was a familiar figure at fairs and markets. This was the travelling quack. With the words, "God greet you, gentlemen all, as the fox said when he peeped into the goose-pen," he introduced himself, and stated that he was in need of a helper. Rubin, the merry fellow, applied for the situation, and after considerable haggling they agreed upon a price. Rubin then opened out the quack's stock, helped to prepare the medicines, and explained their virtues to the crowd. At last he decided he would also have helpers. A second buffoon, called Purterbalk, and a third named Listerbalk, who was hunchbacked, applied; and while they were squabbling together a strophe of the three Marys' song was heard, as they were on their way to the sepulchre. The three wags advanced to the front of the stage and began selling the medicines, and when the quack thought they were selling



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## ❖ THE MYSTERY PLAY ❖

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them too cheap, Rubin sharply reprimanded him. While the three Marys were still on their way the quack lay down and went to sleep ; whereupon Rubin made off with his entire stock. His awakening and wrathful imprecations ended the humorous interlude. The three Marys were seen at the sepulchre and the angel announced to them the resurrection of the Lord.

The effect of this drama was so overpowering that reverence for the sacred associations was not affected in the least by these merry interludes, which were peculiarly adapted to the childish sentiment of the people. The denouement of the play represented the arrival of the Saviour in Heaven with a number of the elect, and God the Father, sitting in His majesty, welcoming them.

## *Chapter IV*

### *The Black Death*

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WHILE Arnold was staying at the monastery and approaching young manhood, a terrible calamity visited the world and made its way into the peaceful little valley. Year after year reports had come that a frightful pestilence was raging in the eastern part of Asia and spreading from country to country. Ships laden with rich cargoes were found at sea, drifting about and their crews all dead.

The trade route from China led through central Asia to the Tauric coast,<sup>1</sup> whence the products of the Orient were transported to Constantinople, at that time the emporium for the three divisions of the earth. Over this route the plague spread into all lands. The terrible disease first appeared in Europe in the maritime cities of Italy, France, and Spain, and in the course of three years gradually but surely spread all over central Europe, Poland, and Russia, climbed the chalk cliffs of England, and ascended to

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<sup>1</sup> The Crimea.

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## ❖ THE BLACK DEATH ❖

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the extreme northern part of Scandinavia. It was attended by strange manifestations, unknown up to that time, such as cramps, heart palpitation, lethargy, and in some cases delirium. Swellings as large as eggs appeared under the arms and knees. Black or blue spots came on various parts of the body, sometimes large and single, sometimes in small groups. At first it was denied that the disease was a pestilence, but when the strange malady spread so rapidly it was recognized as an actual pestilence. There was no other name for it.

Several causes were assigned for it. It was variously attributed to the just wrath of God at the wickedness of humanity; to the influences of the heavenly bodies; to the conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter; to unusual convulsions of nature which had either preceded or followed it. Reports had long before come from China of great earthquakes, sunken mountains, droughts, floods, crop failures, and subsequent famines. Syria and Egypt also had been visited by earthquakes. The same manifestations, followed by raging storms and floods, had also appeared in Cyprus and in Naples and other cities. Similar convulsions had been experienced in Germany. Many houses had been hurled into

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❖ ARNOLD OF WINKELRIED ❖

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the Rhine by a great earthquake at Basle. In Carinthia, cities and castles had been destroyed. As the excited imagination of the people connected these events with the dreadful disease, it was natural for them to consider these manifestations as the cause, and crop failures and famines as the result. The pestilence, which so readily found victims among people condemned to want, wretchedness, and despair, came to be known as the Black Death. When it attacked a household it was not contented with one victim. Almost every well person who breathed the same air as the sick one, or who had even touched his clothing, was stricken with it. Human science and medical skill were of no avail. It was in vain that cities were cleansed of filth and offal, and that infected persons were forbidden to enter them. Sanitary measures were of no avail. Flight was useless, for the terrible malady overtook the fleetest and spared neither the distinguished nor the insignificant, neither the strong nor the weak, neither the layman nor the priest. It was in vain that the church framed three prayers, to be offered at daybreak, midday, and evening, at the summons of the church bells. The mass which Pope Clemens the Sixth, who resided at Avignon, arranged for the

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## ❖ THE BLACK DEATH ❖

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supplication of divine mercy was fruitless. The head of Christendom himself withdrew from contact with the outside world, behind a perpetually burning fire of coals. Ceremonial processions were also arranged to avert the evil. The people joined them in multitudes. Many women walked barefooted, clad in sackcloth. Ecclesiastics, brotherhoods carrying lighted tapers, and guilds bearing banners and singing prayers and the litany also marched. Suddenly it was discovered that the number of victims was increasing because of the densely crowded throngs watching these processions. In the large cities people died by hundreds ; in the smaller ones, by scores. The closest family ties were dissipated like spiders' webs. Brothers forsook brothers, wives their husbands. Parents forbore visiting their sick children. The best of friends avoided each other on the streets.

The sick were deserted save by their attendants, and the service of the latter was so difficult to procure, except at very high prices, — for nurses' lives were in constant danger, — that many of the poor died absolutely alone. Depositing the dead in the church vaults and keeping them over night in the houses where they had died were strictly forbidden.

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## ❖ ARNOLD OF WINKELRIED ❖

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It was ordered that they should be interred at once ; and as the churchyards in the cities were not large enough to accommodate them, they were buried by thousands in great trenches. Every one expected the Black Death any moment. Trade and commerce were paralyzed. Merchants cared no longer for the valuables for which they had worked so hard ; churches and schools were closed ; the administration of justice ceased. There were no sounds in the factories, no rattle of carriages or cries of venders in the streets. The fields were left untilled. There was hardly one among the few who stole through the empty streets who did not show some sign of the awful visitation. Fear, sorrow, and despair were manifest in every face. If one wore a beard it was unkempt and the hair was long and straggling, for no one cared for his looks. Some held small metallic discs containing medicated sponges to their noses, hoping in this way not to inhale the tainted air. The few who recovered from the plague were regarded as a specially privileged class. They went about freely and fearlessly amid dangers, for it was something unheard of to have the disease twice. But among those who were liable to be attacked any instant there were some who were determined to do

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## ❖ THE BLACK DEATH ❖

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all they could at this time of universal gloom. Compassion and love were stronger in their hearts than ever before, and wherever they could be of help they were ready with word and deed.

The plague invaded Switzerland also, and raged more violently in its mountain regions than it did in the lowlands. The clear, healthy atmosphere of the high lying valley of Engelberg did not save it from the visitation of this gruesome guest, but it only met faces full of spiritual illumination in the death shadows which followed its track. Strengthened by holy love and despising danger, the Benedictines went among the sick and those struggling with death, to help the one and administer consolation to the other. Upon this small spot of earth the plague carried off sixteen victims in a single day and in four months twenty homes were devastated.

No one in those days of gloom and despair set a brighter example of courage and self-sacrificing love than Father Vincentius. It had always been his desire to give his life for his neighbors, and now the opportunity was granted him. Wherever there was sickness he was found performing every needful service; and Arnold, a faithful, courageous helper, was by his side. The youth had nothing more to

lose, for both his parents were victims of the plague. He had closed the eyes of his uncle Berthold, abbot of Engelberg, after his two sisters, Adelheid and Elspeth, had passed away. Amid these dreadful scenes he had no other feeling than one of the deepest sympathy for those whom he visited daily ; and death, even in its most terrible shapes, had no terrors for him. It was thus he strengthened himself for the heroic deed which was to perpetuate the name of Winkelried in the memory of the fatherland. Side by side with Father Vincentius he encountered the plague and often wondered why he kept so strong and well. He endured these extraordinary exertions, which kept him up day and night, because of his youthful vigor ; but the old Benedictine felt his strength failing more and more every day. His once upright frame was bowed and his face grew thin and sunken. Spiritual strength alone sustained his exhausted body.

While returning to the monastery one evening with Arnold, he felt a depression, weariness in his feet, and difficulty in breathing, which he attributed to the day's exertions. In the night he was visited by unpleasant dreams. In one of these he fancied he was in a great crowd of men with gray, faded,



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## ❖ THE BLACK DEATH ❖

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sightless faces. As they pressed against him, his nearest neighbor pushed his elbow into his side causing such a stinging pain that he awoke. His heart was beating violently. There was a ringing in his ears, severe pain in his limbs, and his whole body seemed on fire. He placed his hand upon the stinging spot — there was a great swelling!

Father Vincentius was not alarmed. "The Lord calls me," he murmured, and clasped his hands in prayer.

When Arnold entered his cell the next morning and found him in bed, he recognized the signs of the disease the instant he saw him. He knew, as well as any physician, the remedies which should be given and he applied them all. With quiet resignation the monk awaited dissolution; but as the disease was making rapid progress, it became necessary for him to speak at once so that he should be clearly understood.

"Praised be the Lord for his justice! Praised be the Lord in healing as in death," he said to himself. Then, turning to Arnold, he continued: "Many are called, but few are chosen. God has sent the Black Death to mankind to reserve a chosen few among its survivors who shall grow

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## ❖ ARNOLD OF WINKELRIED ❖

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better by sorrow and nobler by gratitude, and find to their great joy what an inestimable boon life is. Devote it to good works and offer them to Him. You have learned this, my son. You have accomplished it. May God graciously guide you with His strong hand through these troubles, so that the lofty purpose and noble courage which you have displayed so splendidly in this narrow sphere of action may be devoted hereafter to the welfare of your fatherland. It needs just such men as you have already shown yourself to be." Father Vincentius then gave Arnold his blessing and asked for the last sacrament which was administered by one of the brothers of the order.

Toward evening his sufferings ended, and that night the stars shone upon his grave, where Arnold lamented the last dear friend he had. But he must live on. So he still breathed the tainted air, still waited upon the sick, still placed the dead in their coffins; but the plague did not attack him. None of the brothers except his uncle and Father Vincentius died, but five students fell victims, and one hundred and sixty nuns were carried from the women's cloisters to the grave in four months.

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## ❖ THE BLACK DEATH ❖

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One day a young wanderer called at the monastery and begged for breakfast and a little money. It was Florian Häbli, Arnold's old-time playmate. His father, mother, and sisters had perished, and the orphan was forced out into the world to look out for himself.

We have not yet reached the close of these terrible scenes. As if victims of the plague itself were too few, the despised and hated Jews, who lived near the Christians in the large cities, were accused by superstitious persons of poisoning the water in order to spread the plague and exterminate their enemies. These accusations were all the more readily believed when it was noticed that the Jews abstained from water and were less liable to take the disease than the Christians. It mattered not to their accusers that it was the Jews' foresight which led them to avoid drinking water and that their greater moderation in living helped to protect them. And yet so many Jews died in Goslar and Vienna that their burial places were insufficient, and in cities like Leipsic and Magdeburg where no Jews resided the plague was as fatal as in other places. The popular clamor, however, increased. City authorities who harbored Jews were urged to adopt

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## ❖ ARNOLD OF WINKELRIED ❖

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most cruel measures. The Jews were placed upon the rack and forced to confess crimes of which they were not guilty, and were banished from cities after their property had been confiscated. And this was not the worst. Every appeal of humanity was stifled by the unchristian and bitter hatred of the people. Only a few escaped with the penalty of exile and loss of property. Very many must have perished by fire. In almost all the Rhine cities and in some others also, not only in Germany but in neighboring countries, they were burned without trial or even examination. In utter despair they submitted to their terrible fate and even anticipated it. Six thousand Jews burned themselves in their own houses; and at Esslingen, Worms, and Speier they assembled in their synagogues and then fired them.

Still the plague did not cease, and the people soon decided that it was not caused by human agencies. The conviction became universal that it was the divine penalty for the prevailing immorality. Reconciliation with God became the watchword. It must be secured by expiation. The better classes sought for it by adopting a pious course of life. Parents taught their children to pray and to submit to the divine will. Others sought to propitiate

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## ❖ THE BLACK DEATH ❖

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God with gifts to the Church. Many others believed that the sins of their past wanton lives could be atoned for by physical suffering only, and castigated themselves relentlessly. This gave rise to the brotherhood of the Flagellants. They increased by hundreds and thousands all over Germany, and each brotherhood had its own head and regulations. One of these marched behind a cross. A red cross was also fastened upon the cloak and the hat of each Flagellant, and at his side hung the scourge—a short stick, with three stout thongs tied at the ends in a hard knot, in which were inserted two sharp iron prongs set crosswise. When the procession approached any place several Flagellants with showy banners of costly purple velvet or embroidered silk, waxen tapers flickering among them, assembled behind the cross-bearer. The rest marched two by two, with hats pulled down and looking before them silently and sorrowfully. Singing expiatory songs, they entered the place, greeted and accompanied by the tolls of the church bells. Great crowds of serious-faced persons followed the strange procession to the church, where the Flagellants prostrated themselves several times before the altar. On the next morning they formed their procession in the

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## ❖ ARNOLD OF WINKELRIED ❖

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same order as on the day before and, followed by all the people, marched to the place of scourging. There they took off their shoes and removed their outer garments, leaving the upper part of the body nude. Then they advanced in the shape of a wide cross and prostrated themselves. Each one announced the offence for which he desired to make expiation. The perjurers rested upon one side, with three fingers raised above the head; liars stretched their hands out before them; drunkards placed their hands upon their mouths. Those who were not guilty of any particular offence lay with their arms outstretched on the ground in the shape of a cross. Then the leader, or master, arose, made a short address, and struck each with the scourge. The brothers arose in turn and imitated the master. The best singers then advanced, and while they sang with subdued voices, the Flagellants lashed each other with the iron thongs until blood streamed down their backs.

In the meantime the thousands of spectators stood in a profound silence, broken only by occasional sighs or loud weeping. Others imitated what they saw; and then followed the reading of a document which was said to be a direct message from

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## ❖ THE BLACK DEATH ❖

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God to sinful humanity. The Flagellants seldom left a place without gaining new members. A hundred of them went from Basle to Avignon and scourged themselves in the presence of the Pope. He did not believe, however, that God was pleased with such acts, and issued a bull forbidding Christians to perform flagellation in public, under penalty of excommunication.

Neither Jewish persecutions nor flagellation were of any avail in checking the plague. It spread through the terrified world. A fourth part of the population of Europe perished. After it subsided, the old worldly pleasures were resumed above those countless graves; but there were many who, in those terrible years of trial, had returned to the divine allegiance, and who consecrated the precious gift of life to that exercise of Christian love which Father Vincentius, before his departure, characterized as the noblest fruit of the divine justice.

## Chapter V

### *The Robber Knights*

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ZURICH, which had long been a free imperial city, held an important position among the municipalities. Its trade and commerce flourished, nor was it lacking in intellectual activity. It was enjoying a rest from the domination of the great property-holders and nobles, known as the patricians. The guilds had now grown strong enough to assert their opinions. Under the new constitution the Council was composed of thirteen patricians and thirteen members of the guilds. An able and judicious man named Rudolph Brun, leader in the revolt, was appointed burgomaster, and administered his office with a strong, sure hand.

It was natural that the patricians, who had exercised such absolute authority, should not relish the new order of things. They had a numerous following among the nobles outside the cities. These nobles scrupled not to attack and rob city merchants



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## ❖ THE ROBBER KNIGHTS ❖

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travelling in the mountain regions and levy tribute upon them. They were not on good terms with the cities. Life in the castles grew constantly quieter and more lonesome; the attendants demanded higher remuneration, and if their demands were not granted they would take themselves off and seek shelter behind the city walls, where they were protected and had greater freedom and more privileges than in the castles. For these reasons the nobles were naturally incensed at the cities, which were continually growing stronger, while the castle power was continually growing less.

Castle Reienstein had experienced these depressing changes. It had been left in a wretched plight to the young nobleman Jörgel, by his father. We behold him sitting one day at a window which commanded a wide prospect, engaged in fitting a new leash for his falcon. "You accursed bird," he growled, "I feel like flinging you away for your obstinacy. If you go hungry for a time and have to look out for yourself perhaps you will come to your senses."

With these words he threw the hood over the falcon's head and went to an inner apartment, the only one which was fit for occupancy in his present

circumstances, and which served alike for kitchen and sleeping room.

"Jörgel, come to table," said Brigitte, his old aunt, who shared with him the poverty of castle Reienstein. After removing several things which littered up the rickety old table, she placed upon it a mess of lentils in a not over clean dish, and brought two plates and rusty knives and forks from a shelf. Jörgel reluctantly seated himself and sniffed at the little piece of sausage which his aunt fished out of the lentils and divided with him.

"A feast for the gods," growled Jörgel. "I tell you, Aunt, I can't stand this kind of thing much longer."

"You are always complaining about your lot," replied Brigitte, as she poked the lentils with her fork. "It would be more reasonable if you would try to better it. Fine chances are open to you. Why do you not open your eyes like other folks?"

"What can help such a poor devil as I am?" replied Jörgel. "The Mörspergers and Waltihofners have fast, stout horses which can make ten miles on the road without hurting a hoof; my nag can scarcely go from here to Zurich in a day, and if I hurry him he is winded. All my neighbors

have money and can pay handsomely for service, but I have to put up with a ragged, ignorant journeyman, as you well know. When we come to divide, I get the leavings. I must get about in all kinds of weather, attend to affairs, and go half starved, while others who are not a whit more deserving can live in clover. I am sick of such injustice, plague upon it."

"You are very hard to satisfy, Jörgel, and a lazy lout besides," said Brigitte. "Think of others who are no better off than you are, and yet have wives and children to look after, while you are single, and have a careful, economical aunt to run your house! You can go and come when you please, and always find something to eat and sometimes an abundance, for your affairs do not always turn out badly. When the highways fail you, the forests supply plenty of game. At home you can stretch out on your straw bed, or train your falcon, or fix things when they need it. You have always something to wear, so —"

"Have I? Just take a look at my coat," interrupted Jörgel. "There is a hole in the elbow of the right sleeve."

"Is that so?" said Brigitte. "Hand me my

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❖ ARNOLD OF WINKELRIED ❖

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needle and thread from the window shelf, and I will soon fix that."

Jörgel betook himself to a small grindstone in a corner of the room to sharpen his hunting-knife. "I tell you what, Aunt, sing me a song to drive away the blues and make the stone turn more easily."

"Certainly, my Jörgel," assented Brigitte. She hung the mended coat upon a hook in the wall, and after giving the cat the scanty bits left from the meal, she sang, while clearing up the dishes, a ballad about Count Rudolf of Hapsburg — how he besieged the city of Glanzenburg and floated huge wine-casks down the Rhine, out of which armed men suddenly sprang; and how the Count took advantage of the confusion of the people to storm the unprotected walls.

After she had finished singing, the old woman remarked: "The cat has scratched herself several times behind the ear and my nose itches all the time. These things betoken a visitor."

"I hope it is not an unwelcome one," said Jörgel, "that Waltihofener whom I still owe ten shillings lost at dice, or that laborer whose hay I carried off from his rick, or —"

"Have no fears on that account, Jörgel," replied his aunt. "You can get rid of the Waltihofener with fine words, and you can pitch the laborer downstairs. Now, my left hand begins to itch, and that means good luck, or money, which amounts to the same thing."

Jörgel's wheel flew so fast that it emitted sparks, and the falcon upon its perch fluttered its feathers in affright. Suddenly a young man, who lived in the lower part of the tumble-down building, called out at the door: "Noble sir, my father bids me tell you that a gentleman from Mörsperg has just arrived, and is even now putting his horse in the stall."

"Did I not prophesy rightly?" triumphantly exclaimed Brigitte. "All the signs pointed to a visit, and the itching of my left hand meant good luck."

"We shall see," replied Jörgel. He rose from his rough wooden seat, drew on his boots, and put on his waistcoat. His aunt hastily set things in order, and had hardly finished when steps were heard on the stairs, and the herculean figure of Veit of Mörsperg entered and saluted them with a roaring "Good day!" He shook Jörgel's hand and roughly slapped Brigitte on her bent back.

"I bring you good news," he said, stroking his great beard.

Jörgel's face brightened up. "You look as happy as if you were breaking into some rich merchant's treasure box," said Jörgel, with difficulty restraining his curiosity.

"It is something better than that," said Veit, as he sat down upon the bed. "The Zurich oligarchy has come to an end."

"Is that true?" shouted Jörgel. "Then the mob of the workshops may be in the Council."

"Seven hundred patricians have united against the aristocratic city regime," replied Veit.

"They are few compared with the crowds in the guilds and corporations," said Brigitte.

"Be patient! I know still more," said Veit. "The patricians have very wisely united with the counts of Rupperschwyl, who will invade the city; and other knights near by are to join them."

"And I fancy that you will have the same honor," said Jörgel.

"You are right," replied Veit; "and as I am going to join, I advise you to do the same."

"It is very good of you," said Jörgel, "but if this movement is intended merely to help the

patricians to regain their seats in the Council, I have no desire to risk my head."

"Blockhead!" shouted Veit. "Do you suppose that I am going to help pull chestnuts out of the fire for others without making sure of a good slice for myself? I intend to profit by the confusion of the others."

"Ah! now I understand," said Jörgel, with a cunning laugh. "Go ahead! I am with you. But when will the dance begin?"

"When the clock strikes ten to-morrow the gates will be secretly opened and the Rupperschwyls and their following will enter the city and fall upon their opponents, who little dream what is in store for them. In the meantime, friend Jörgel, we shall have been waiting our chance. We shall leave our armor at home so as not to arouse suspicion. A good dagger will be enough for our purpose. But we must be off at once, for your nag needs plenty of time for a ride to Zurich."

"For Heaven's sake, be off," muttered Aunt Brigitte, as she went to a corner of the room and took down Jörgel's riding cloak, which ordinarily served to conceal Brigitte's old and torn best dress.

Jörgel girded on his rapier belt, stuck his dagger

in it, put on his cap and plume, and threw the cloak over his shoulder. Then he took a hasty leave of his aunt, and promised her a new dress if everything went well. Whereupon she invoked the blessing of all the saints upon him. When everything was in readiness the two robber knights set off for the city at an easy trot.

Upon the following day we behold Veit striding into the smithy of an armorer which resounds with the lusty hammering of his workmen. The bellows groans, the hammers ring, and songs in Swiss, Swabian, and Bavarian dialects are heard on all sides. One is piling coal upon the fire; another cooling the glowing metal in water from which clouds of steam ascend; others are polishing the steel smooth and bright, while the apprentice is riveting a neckband. In the midst of the busy crowd stands the stately master, examining a steel headpiece, just finished. Seeing Veit, who was one of his customers, he came forward and asked what he wished.

Veit drew a dagger from his cloak. "Here, Master Hildprand," said he, "the hilt of my dagger needs fastening. Fix it and send it as soon as it is done to the Rebstock, but be sure to send it to-day, for I must return home before night."



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## ❖ THE ROBBER KNIGHTS ❖

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Master Hildprand took the dagger and promised to do his utmost to accommodate him, although his work was very pressing.

"That is fine work," said the knight with a well pleased glance at the headpiece in the master's hand.

"This kind is coming more and more into use, and is replacing the helmet," said the smith.

"But I still stick to the helmet," replied Veit. "It is better fitted for resistance. I have no use for these new-fangled inventions."

"And yet we are still far behind the times," said the master with a smile. "When I was working in France they had already gone over to steel. There is no longer any chain armor."

"But how do the French protect the shoulders?"

"With a broad iron band reaching from the neck to the upper part of the arm. That enables the wearer to move the head more freely, which he could not do with the old, awkward style of armor."

"Zounds! There is no end to these improvements," blurted out Veit. "It must take all of ten years to make a new suit of armor now. One needs to be as rich as Cræsus to keep up with them."

"Some of the wealthy gentlemen are just beginning to wear the cuirass."

"Desist, Master Hildprand," said the knight, "else I shall have to stop my ears."

With these words Veit turned to several of the workmen and watched them a short time. Then he stepped up to the apprentice, who was engaged in polishing a headpiece.

"This kind of headpiece is also fast disappearing," said the master. "They are now replacing it with the brigantine, which gives much better service."

"Don't trouble yourself to explain, Master Hildprand! You can't make me believe in your improvements," replied Veit. "But be sure that I get my dagger before night at the Rebstock, do you hear?"

"My boy shall take it to you. Do you know where the Rebstock is, Florian?"

"Yes! that is where the baker's boy was killed," said the apprentice.

"It is not my usual resort," said Veit, vexed at the remark which was far from complimentary to the knight's choice of lodging, "but I am visiting an old acquaintance there." Giving the apprentice

a smart slap on the shoulder, he added: "You seem to have a glib tongue of your own, my boy, but you do good work, I see, and you are quick about it too."

"Oh, he can polish that kind much better than the old-fashioned ones," said the smith, with a glance of pride at the lad. "He is my sainted sister's son and was born at Stans. He lost his father, mother, and all six sisters by the plague."

"Ah! that evil plague," sighed Veit; "it found victims in our family also. Now, good-bye, Master Hildprand."

"Wait a moment, noble sir," said the smith. "I will show you some more new things, among them a movable arrangement turning upon a pivot under the vizor. It protects the chin and neck, and will —"

"Curse you and your improvements. I have heard enough about them already," said the knight as he hurried away.

The Rebstock stood in a blind alley, obscured by overhanging buildings. The reputation of the place was none of the best. It was patronized by the lower classes, and it was reported that its keeper received and sold the plunder stolen by the robber knights of that vicinity. In a little room which

gave upon the narrow back yard, and was reserved for noble guests, sat Veit and Jörgel with a third companion. The latter was the young nobleman, Conrad of Waltihof, who is already known to us by name and who was invited to come there by Veit and participate in their plans during the great surprise which was to happen in the good city of Zurich that day.

It was already dark. A pair of tallow candles shed a feeble light upon a table near the window on which were some glasses of Alsatian wine and at which the three were passing away the time throwing dice. The faces of the players were flushed with the excitement of the game and their varying luck rather than by the effects of the wine, of which each could carry a heavy load. They disputed several times, gave vent to curses, and gesticulated as if they were about to fly at each others' throat, but their quarrels invariably ended in words, not blows. Jörgel at first had won many times the ten shillings he owed Conrad, but he also frequently lost, and at last his losses increased so fast that his debt was very large. He cursed the caprices of the fickle goddess of fortune but consoled himself with the thought that these losses were trifling compared with the treasures he would soon acquire. "Ha! ha!" he

roared, "there will soon be such a game as Zurich has never seen before."

"Restrain yourself and don't shout in that way," said Veit, laying the dice aside. "It is a long time yet before the clock will strike ten and the gates open to the Rupperschwyls."

"They ought to be all around the city before this time," said Conrad.

"All my ten fingers are itching for our work," said Jörgel, "but it is too bad we cannot get at the rich goods of the merchants."

"We ought to have had wagons to carry the plunder to our castles," said Conrad.

"Worse than that, we are expected to divide with the landlord," said Veit, "and the thought does not please me. Therefore I think it would be better for us to take the money to the nearest bankers. And mark what I tell you: if any one interferes with us we can then swear we have clean hands. The Rupperschwyls and patricians can look after the slaughter, for they will kill Burgomaster Brun and the entire new Council."

"Did you hear that?" said Conrad, laughing. "Just think, Jörgel, of Veit's tender conscience. It is as easy as if he had never—"

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## ❖ ARNOLD OF WINKELRIED ❖

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Conrad suddenly ceased talking. A deep sigh was heard which did not come from any of the three. They sprang from their seats and looked about them. Jörgel had the most acute hearing of them all. He traced the unaccountable sound to the vicinity of the door and soon found a figure seated in a chair in a dark corner which the candles failed to light. Uttering a terrible curse he dragged the witness of their conspiracy into the light.

"Boy, you must die," he cried furiously, at the same time holding his victim by the throat so tightly that he could only emit a feeble groan.

"First let him tell how he came here, and let him say his prayers before he dies," said Veit.

"No," said Conrad, "no mercy to a spy." In his wrath he drew his dagger, but he weakened some when he saw a dagger flashing in the uplifted hand of the boy.

"Hold there!" exclaimed Veit. "This is Master Hildprand's apprentice. Let him loose, Jörgel, let him loose, or I will release the poor fellow." As Veit's hand was already upon his weapon, and he was in no mood to be refused, Jörgel obeyed.

"Now, confess," said Veit to the boy in a severe tone. "Your master sent you here with my

dagger, but surely not to play the spy. Speak, youngster !”

Florian Habli threw himself at the knight's feet and protested his innocence. He said he was brought to the room by the landlord, and when he entered the gentlemen were so excited over the dice that they did not notice him. Then their furious dispute frightened him. He dared not advance, and was so terrified that he took the seat in the corner. He was speedily overcome by sleep, for he had been up all the previous night and was deadly sleepy. When or how he awoke he could not say.

“What have you heard of our talk ?” said Veit, harshly.

Florian did not instantly reply, but at last said : “Nothing, not the slightest thing.”

“He is a lying knave,” said Jörgel. “Do you not see how he reddens at every word ?”

“Let's make an end of him,” said Conrad, seizing him by the throat.

“Take your hand away,” said Veit. “This lad is Master Hildprand's apprentice and his favorite sister's son, of whom he is very fond. We must do nothing that will hurt the master, for we all need him. He knows where he sent the boy, and if he

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❖ ARNOLD OF WINKELRIED ❖

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does not return he will know where to look for him. Supposing we kill the lad, how can we conceal his body without taking the landlord into our confidence and placing ourselves completely in his power? ”

“Supposing, then, we shut him up until everything is over,” said Jörgel.

“Then he will raise an alarm,” replied the knight.

“We can keep him here if we bind and gag him,” suggested Conrad.

“But we cannot keep him without the knowledge of the landlord,” objected Veit. “I would rather trust the lad than that throat-cutter.”

“What, then, shall we do?” asked the two conspirators.

“Let the boy take an oath that he will not reveal anything he has heard.”

The other two laughed derisively. “How will an empty oath help us?” said Conrad.

“Silence!” said Veit. “An oath is sacred to this lad.”

He held his dagger hilt as a cross before the apprentice and recited the words of the oath. He was to promise in the name of God and all the saints,



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## ❖ THE ROBBER KNIGHTS ❖

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and as he valued his own soul, never to reveal to any one what he had heard. He would call down upon himself terrible punishment in this world and everlasting damnation in the next if he violated his oath.

With visible emotion the boy repeated the words after him. Veit expressed his satisfaction and let him go, with the injunction to return to the smithy without delay.

When Florian found himself in the street once more his experience seemed like a feverish dream, yet he remembered all that the three men had said, notwithstanding he had denied it when death threatened him. The danger which was hovering over the city and the fate of the people weighed heavily upon his spirit. And yet his lips were sealed by a terrible vow not to make any disclosures, even to a priest, without bringing eternal condemnation upon himself. As he went homeward, suffering with this agony of soul, his comrades were returning joyfully from their work, and fathers were sitting upon the doorsteps with their families, enjoying the beautiful moonlight. On this very day, in a few hours, this peaceful scene would give place to murder and pillage and the horrible work of bloody hands.

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## ❖ ARNOLD OF WINKELRIED ❖

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He was soon in front of the cathedral. It was still open, inviting the repentant and suffering, and involuntarily he entered. Not a soul was to be seen in the vast interior. The moon shone through the tall windows upon the high altar. Seized by a sudden impulse, Florian knelt upon the altar steps and prayed to God for help for the endangered city and consolation for himself. After a fervent prayer he started to leave the sacred place. As he did so, his ear caught the sound of low voices, and looking in the direction from which it proceeded, he perceived a soft gleam of light. He advanced unheard to the confessional. A dark figure, whether man or woman he could not distinguish, was kneeling before it and whispering confession to the priest, who after a few questions said something in response. The white statue of a saint stood near the confessional. An idea flashed through the boy's mind like lightning. He knelt before the statue, stretched out his arms imploringly and loudly exclaimed: "Oh, thou blessed image, the greatest danger threatens the city. The patricians have sworn to kill the burgomaster and Council, and at ten o'clock the gates will open to the Rupperschwyls and their followers. I am vowed to silence. I have sworn not to reveal this to any one,

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## ❖ THE ROBBER KNIGHTS ❖

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but I can keep the secret no longer. Therefore I confide it to thee, and if God, the Lord, does not perform a miracle and open thy mouth, then my words will fall upon deaf ears. But God is my witness that all I have said is true. Amen." Florian noticed that the whispers had ceased. He arose and hastened out of the church.

The night wore on and the streets grew more deserted and silent. The three robber knights in the back room of the Rebstock were dicing again, and in the excitement of the game had forgotten all about the smith's apprentice. A bell sounded in a neighboring tower and all three counted its strokes.

"Nine o'clock," said Veit; "only one hour more and the devil will be loose."

They resumed their dice-throwing, but suddenly the bell was heard again. Its strokes followed in rapid succession, and now all the other bells in the city began to ring. From the summits of the towers the watchmen's horns sounded clear and loud. The storm was about to break. The terrible news spread all over the city that it would be attacked at ten o'clock and given over to fire and sword. There was excitement in every house, and lights suddenly

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## ❖ ARNOLD OF WINKELRIED ❖

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flashed in the windows. The glare of pitchy torches made the streets light as day. The soldiers' quarters resounded with the shrill din of trumpets, and the guilds in armor marched under their banners to make such resistance as they could. At last the enemy poured through the gates, but the Zurich nobles and their Rupperschwyl allies went down in defeat.

Our three robber knights meanwhile had been warned by the signals and wisely remained at the Rebstock, which they did not venture to leave for several days. At last they returned empty-handed to their castles. At first they swore they would kill the apprentice, for they had no doubt that he was the traitor, notwithstanding his oath. The truth, however, gradually dawned upon them and relieved Florian from suspicion. It was everywhere related that the wife of one of the patricians had become conscience-stricken and confided the secret to a priest, and that in this way the burgomaster was warned of the approaching danger.

As the outcome of the "murder night," Zurich joined the League. Lucerne had already done so, and Berne, Zug, and Glarus soon followed, so that

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## ❖ THE ROBBER KNIGHTS ❖

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the League spread to the confines of Burgundy and became very powerful. Thus Uri, Schyws, Unterwalden, Lucerne, Zurich, Zug, Glarus, and Berne were united in an offensive and defensive alliance. These are the eight old cantons.

## Chapter VI

### *The Tournament at Little Basle*

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**A**T the time the League had grown so strong, Duke Albrecht the Second ruled in Austria and enjoyed the friendship of the Emperor Charles the Fourth, of the house of Luxemburg. In preparing for a struggle with the League he had strengthened his castles and cities and had assured himself of the loyal service of his vassals. The war, however, was confined to pillaging expeditions and petty encounters which did the League little harm, and at last an unconditional peace was made between the two parties. After Albrecht's death, his oldest son, Rudolph the Fourth, succeeded. This prince, the first of his house to receive the title of archduke, had the hereditary Hapsburg spirit and strove to the utmost to extend the supremacy of the empire. Notwithstanding the Emperor Charles was his father-in-law, he opposed him by every kind of artifice and continually interfered with his plans. He strengthened himself by alliances with neighboring powers, especially with

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## ❖ THE TOURNAMENT ❖

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Basle and other imperial cities, and weakened the Emperor's power in Italy. By the marriage of his brother Leopold to the daughter of Bernabo Visconti of Milan he secured the adherence of many noble Italian families. He appointed Brun, the Zurich burgomaster, a member of his privy council and thus attached him to his interests. He drove in a wedge between Lake Zurich and Schwyz, by the purchase of territory, and to secure control of the commercial highway from Italy to Germany he built a bridge across the lake upon the pretext of shortening the route for pious pilgrims on their way to retreats. While engaged in these various enterprises the prince died in his twenty-sixth year and was succeeded by his brother Leopold, in 1365.

Leopold, although inclined to mysticism, was of martial spirit and handled the lance at tournaments in a masterly way. Hardly a year of his life had passed without finding him engaged in war. While he had a numerous following of knights and nobles, his devoutness and straightforwardness also commended him to the favor of the people, among whom many stories of his acts of generosity were told, like those reported later about his Uncle Maximilian, "the last of the knights."

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## ❖ ARNOLD OF WINKELRIED ❖

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Leopold took such advantage of the quarrels between the petty princes in upper Italy that he soon checked the designs of the powerful republic of Venice. His father-in-law Visconti was of great service to him in this. The predecessors of Visconti had established their power when the Lombardy League was swallowed up in a multitude of petty sovereignties. The masters of Milan at this time, Bernabò and his brother Galeazzo the Second, needing brave soldiers for their wars of conquest, many young men of the mountain country organized into troops which were granted special privileges because of their loyalty to the Viscontis. The two Milan lords were excellent army leaders but tyrannical toward their subjects. At last they became so bold as to take up arms against Pope Gregory the Eleventh, for which they were excommunicated. At the same time the Pope forbade these young mountaineers to render service to them. They recognized the papal authority and most of them returned to their homes.

Among them was Arnold of Winkelried. His home possessions were insignificant. We have already seen that even as a boy he had shown a warlike spirit in numerous ways. He had practised all



the feats of arms with indefatigable activity, and had been well instructed in them, but as there were few opportunities for their use at home he had taken service at Milan. He fought for strangers to learn how to fight for his fatherland whenever it should need his help. He had participated in numerous encounters, had been wounded several times, and had won such distinction that he was admitted to knighthood.

In the beginning of the year 1370 Arnold of Winkelried once more stood upon his native soil. He was tall, powerful, and in the very prime of his manhood. He vainly sought for the opportunity to perform active deeds. Peace and quiet prevailed all over the country. His restless spirit was not satisfied with managing the small home affairs. He longed for the tumult of battle and the strenuous life of the soldier, to which he had been accustomed of late. He endured the quiet of Stans for a few weeks only, after which notwithstanding the inclement season of the year he undertook a journey to the larger cities of the League, to see and hear what was going on. It was not mere chance that took him to Zurich. He had been told at Stans that his old-time playmate, Florian Habli, whom he met as

a houseless wanderer at the monastery of Engelberg and had helped to the utmost of his ability, was living with a famous armorer at Zurich. He sought him there to have a talk over old times, and found him in the midst of a crowd of workmen in the same place where we have seen him as Master Hildprand's apprentice. The meeting was a cordial one. When the old-time fisherman and woodcutter's son began by addressing Arnold as "sir knight" and "noble sir," he was firmly bidden to use the familiar "thou."

As they had much to talk about, the armorer entertained his distinguished visitor in his own house. Florian's uncle was childless, and as he was comfortably off and wished to live quietly in his old age, he had transferred his prosperous business to his nephew, who was conducting it with like success. In the meantime Florian had gone about the world considerably, and had worked in many a famous city. He had been in Strasburg, where for more than three centuries they had been building a magnificent cathedral, the spire of which was just beginning to rise. He had also stood before a mighty cathedral in Cologne, which was begun a century before, but in late times the work had

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## ❖ THE TOURNAMENT ❖

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stopped. In no city, however, had he seen so much activity as at Prague. The Emperor Charles had laid out an entirely new section of the city in which numerous churches and monasteries were going up, and a great stone bridge was built over the Moldau. The finest structure, however, was the training school, the scholars in which were called students. Florian had also worked for a time at Frankfort-on-the-Main, and he could hardly find words to describe the fair which was held there twice a year. It was to this fair that the large cities on the Rhine, from Basle to Cologne, sent their merchandise; and heavily laden vessels brought goods there from France. Fur dealers from the Hanse towns, linen and lace dealers from the cities of Flanders, and goldsmiths from Burgundy met there. England's steel wares as well as the various products of Wales were exhibited. Every building was packed with people and goods to the roof, great multitudes thronged the streets, and as the city could not accommodate all the strangers, many of them had to live in tents. It was one of the grandest of spectacles. Florian had seen an ostrich and an elephant there for the first time; and one of the numerous pickpockets had made off with his purse. He talked

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## ❖ ARNOLD OF WINKELRIED ❖

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long about his adventures in other cities, but he made no mention of his exciting experiences at the Rebstock, for he still respected his oath. He felt a quiet satisfaction at having saved Zurich, and attributed to it all the blessings which had been so generously bestowed upon him within its walls.

Arnold talked of his war adventures in Italy, and as he came to the end he said: "But now my sword and armor are rusting. I vainly look for any place in the world where war is going on and glory can be found. I am sick of these peaceful times."

Master Florian significantly placed his forefinger upon his nose. He could give him some information. There was a region in northern Prussia where the clash of arms never ceased. The pagan Prussians were not yet conquered, and there was always plenty of fighting in the adjacent Lithuania. Many a one who had been told this by Florian had been there and had brought back dreadful news about the country and its savage inhabitants.

Arnold was at last satisfied. The greater the danger the greater the glory, especially when gained in fighting for the spread of Christianity. Nothing would suit him better than to go to that northern country. It increased his delight when Florian told

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## ❖ THE TOURNAMENT ❖

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him there was an opportunity for him to go with a goodly company. Duke Leopold had arranged an expedition for that very purpose. It was said he had already assembled a thousand knights from Austria, Swabia, and other German countries. They were to meet at Basle, and the Duke was to hold a grand tournament there on Shrove Tuesday, and then leave at once for Marienburg, the castle of the Teutonic Order.

Arnold decided on the instant to join the expedition, but he was also anxious to show his prowess at the tournament, so that he should not be a stranger in this array of famous knights and nobles. But Shrove Tuesday was only a few days off, and as he must return to Stans, the time was too short to allow of his getting to Basle in good season. He explained the situation to Florian, who replied: "If it is your armor that delays you, as I surmise, the journey to Stans is unnecessary. You need armor and a horse. As far as armor and weapons are concerned, I have everything you want and you are welcome to use it; and as far as the horse is concerned, I have a friend here who has several fine ones, which even Duke Leopold himself would not be ashamed to ride. He will let you have one on

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## ❖ ARNOLD OF WINKELRIED ❖

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my security, and all you have to do is to make your choice."

Arnold cordially shook Florian's hand and thanked him for his friendly assistance, of which he should certainly avail himself. "But you know, Florian," he said with a smile, "that horse and armor belong to the knight who unseats his opponent. Supposing I should be the unfortunate one!"

"I am not afraid of that," said Florian, regarding him with a look of pride. "I know my hero of Pilatus."

Arnold soon made a choice of armor and weapons from the young master's large stock. He selected a snow-white battle-horse which combined strength and suppleness of limb with a fiery nature. Thus equipped and well mounted, Arnold rode off one day to Basle, after taking a cordial farewell of Florian.

The free city of Basle is situated upon the Rhine. Great Basle is upon one bank and Little Basle upon the other. On the morning of Shrove Tuesday the city was crowded with a multitude of persons who had come on foot and horse, some to participate in the merry-makings of the city, and others to attend

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## ❖ THE TOURNAMENT ❖

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the tournament. The tilting-field was oval in shape, and surrounded by gayly decorated lists. The stands filled gradually. The marshals of the tournament, staves in hand, took their seats with their halberds placed before them. The referees sat below them, and the herald stood in front, clad in glistening mail, adorned with the heraldic symbols.

Suddenly there was a jubilant outburst from the musicians' gallery as Duke Leopold appeared upon his proudly prancing steed, attended by a brilliant retinue of pages and squires. After he had dismounted, the Duke seated himself under a canopy, with his attendants stationed about him in a circle. He waved a white handkerchief as the signal for the tournament to begin. The gates were opened, and accompanied by strains of music the combatants rode around the lists with lances at rest. Six of them went to six tents at the north end of the arena. There they dismounted, leaving their steeds to the care of servants, and each went to his tent, upon which was suspended his escutcheon. These were the six challenging knights.

At a signal from the trumpet the herald rode to the centre of the arena and proclaimed the regulations so that all might hear. Then there was a

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## ❖ ARNOLD OF WINKELRIED ❖

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sudden commotion at the south end, caused by the rush of knights who were to contest with the challengers. Only six could be chosen, and these were selected by lot. Each one of these touched the escutcheon of the one with whom he was to contend, with his lance, doing it with the blunt end and not the point, which signified that the contest was not a life and death one, but a test of skill and strength on each side.

When the six knights had ridden back and formed in line, the six challengers mounted their steeds and took their places a short distance away from the others. At the sound of the trumpet both parties rushed at each other. The challengers were apparently sure of success. Five of their opponents were unhorsed at the first onset, but the sixth knight kept his saddle. Both his own lance and that of his opponent were shattered at the same time, so that neither was victor. Amid the shouts of the crowd and the din of trumpets the challengers rode back to their tents, and the vanquished ones picked themselves up and disappeared from the arena. The contest was soon resumed. After many others had been defeated there was a pause. It seemed as if no one cared to enter the lists.



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## ❖ THE TOURNAMENT ❖

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Suddenly a trumpet sounded at the southern end of the arena, and the crowd beheld a knight of stately figure riding up to the six tents at the northern end upon a milk-white steed. He halted, and his lance touched an escutcheon which was decorated with a tree and two ravens hovering over it. There was universal astonishment, for the owner of this escutcheon was the most dexterous and powerful of all the challengers. He instantly came from his tent to ascertain who his opponent was. The latter lifted his visor and disclosed the face of Arnold of Winkelried, as the reader probably has anticipated. The other, taking Arnold's courtesy for an expression of scorn, also lifted his visor and disclosed the stern features of Veit of Mörsperg.

"Your steed pleases me. It looks to me as if it might soon have another stall, and I have one which will suit him, and there is plenty of room in my armor chamber for that mail of yours," scornfully said Veit, as he gloated over the prizes of the contest, which he was sure were his.

"Many thanks for your warning," replied Arnold, "but if you expect to secure the prize, I would advise you to take a fresh horse and new lance, for you are sadly in need of both."

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## ❖ ARNOLD OF WINKELRIED ❖

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Hardly had the trumpet sounded when the two dashed from their places with lightning speed and met in the centre of the arena with such force that both their lances were shattered and the horses sank upon their haunches, but by the help of bridle and spurs they were soon up again. Fire flashed from Veit's eyes as he looked at his opponent. Both went back for new lances. They rushed at each other again at the sound of the trumpet. Veit aimed a thrust at Arnold's head, which would have been dangerous had it succeeded, but Arnold evaded it and thereupon struck Veit's shield such a powerful blow in the centre that his opponent wavered in the saddle and the lance was shattered. After Arnold had secured another lance the two knights made the third attack. This time the order was reversed. It was now the Mörsperger's lance which struck Arnold's shield in the centre. Arnold wavered for a second, for the thrust was so powerful that the splinters flew far and wide; but at the same instant, Arnold with well directed aim had struck Veit's helmet with such force that he was unhorsed and fell backwards. A cloud of dust hid them while the multitude were enthusiastically hailing the victor. When it cleared away, horse and rider were already up, and

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## ❖ THE TOURNAMENT ❖

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Veit, bleeding from a wound in the face, snarled at his conqueror, "We shall meet again."

"There will be ample opportunity on our way to the North, I hope," replied Arnold. Veit made no reply. He had no intention of going there, for there was not sufficient plunder among the savages to tempt him. The meeting, however, took place at another time, as we shall see.

Arnold, who had come to Basle with borrowed armor, won not less than five prizes that day. When the tournament was finished he sent back his steed and armor to their owners at Zurich and took for himself only those which he had won from Veit. He declined the rest as well as the money with which by the rules of the tournament the vanquished might redeem their property.

## *Chapter VII*

### *Storming of a Lithuanian Castle*

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FOLLOWED by a brilliant array of fifteen hundred knights and horsemen, among whom was Arnold of Winkelried, Duke Leopold set out from Little Basle to coöperate with the forces of the Teutonic Order in the far North. Moving from eight to ten hours a day, the march being occasionally interrupted by military exercises, the army passed through several small countries, territories of the Church, and free imperial cities, until it reached Marienburg, the seat of the Order.

After the subjugation of the Prussians still worse heathen remained. These were the Lithuanians, who had extended their domain to the Black Sea by repeated conquests from Russia. Their country was flat and covered with marshes, steppes, and sand dunes. In its impenetrable primeval forests, filled with gigantic trees, whose branches closely interlaced, roamed bears and wolves, elks and buffaloes.

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## ❖ A LITHUANIAN CASTLE ❖

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It was not the purpose of the Order to subjugate the Lithuanian people, but to restore quiet in the Order's own territory and protect it from continual ravages by pillaging hordes. A strong boundary wall had been constructed to prevent their incursions, but as this had proved insufficient it was determined they should be attacked in their own country.

The leaders of the Lithuanians at that time were the brothers Kynstutt and Olgjerd. Kynstutt was an enemy not to be despised; his restless energy had long kept the Order busy. The heathen army was between thirty and forty thousand strong, and among them were Russian auxiliaries and excellent archers. The Lithuanians carried heavy battle axes, though their principal weapons were the pike and shield, and they also had many horsemen. Notwithstanding their numbers, they were not the equals of the Order in military skill, whether in siege or field. Kynstutt knew this very well and for that reason would not risk battle in the open. He conducted his pillaging expeditions over as wide an area as possible. At one time he would swiftly and suddenly fall upon the Order's supply trains and slaughter the guards; at others he would burn castles and seek by every means in his power to

prevent the building of new ones. He erected castles himself, and as fast as they were destroyed by the knights he would rebuild them. The three most important of these castles were those of Wielun, Pisten, and Kauén. The last was the most remote and was the strongest, being built of stone.

Winrich of Kniprode, grand master of the Order, was completing his plans for the destruction of this castle, when Duke Leopold of Austria arrived at Marienburg with his brilliant array of knights — a strong and welcome reinforcement. The route of the army took them past both the castles of Wielun and Pisten, which were left unmolested. A landing was effected upon the island of Kauén, and a camp was established in which all the supplies were stored. A bridge of boats was also constructed to the right bank of the Niemen, where the castle stood upon a tongue of land — upon the spot where now stands the city of Kovno.<sup>1</sup> The building of this bridge took three days, and before it was finished Kynstutt appeared with an army for the relief of the castle. He fell back, however, after a brief encounter and occupied the heights on the land side, east of the

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<sup>1</sup> Kovno is the capital of the government of Kovno, at the junction of the Vilia and Niemen rivers in Russia.

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## ❖ A LITHUANIAN CASTLE ❖

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castle. To prevent him from making a sudden descent upon the camp, a breastwork of stone and wooden stakes was made, stretching in the shape of a bow from the Vilia to the Niemen. The flower of the army was placed in this intrenched camp. Another part was assigned to guard the supplies, and the remainder occupied themselves with the management of the siege machines. Missiles from the castle could not reach far enough to disturb the work, which progressed under the direction of a master smith and carpenter.

The part of the castle called "the house" was built of wood. The fortified part consisted of high, strong walls, constructed in a parallelogram about the house. The garrison was amply provided with means of defence. Waydott, son of Kynstutt, was chief in command, and in his garrison were forty boyars, who were warriors of unusual distinction and wealth. There were also many Russian archers. The garrison in all numbered between four and five thousand men.

After all the preparations were made, an advance was ordered from the two rivers for assault at the main point, where the *tumler* was already at work. The principal feature of this machine was a huge

tree-trunk, a hundred feet in length, suspended by chains. It was drawn back by hand and then propelled against the wall with terrific force. At the head of it was a sickle-shaped iron, for tearing away dislodged stones. As the *tumler* could only be used in the immediate vicinity of the enemy, its operators were protected by a low building called "the cat." It had strong sides and a roof to which the chains were attached. The whole rested upon wooden block wheels by which it could be pushed up to the walls.

An assault was directed against a tower by the outer gate. Its defenders were by no means inactive. They hurled huge rocks from the wall upon the roof of "the cat," and tried to tear it to pieces with long, hooked poles. They also poured burning pitch upon it, but as the roof was covered with wet, undressed skins, it resisted the fire. At last the outer gate tower gave way before the continuous concussion and fell in a mass of ruins.

Following up this first success, the besiegers prepared for an attack upon the wall itself. For this purpose the *helepolis* was employed. This machine was also called the *ebenhöhe* because it had to be of even height with the wall. The colossus was made



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## ❖ A LITHUANIAN CASTLE ❖

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of stout beams and rested upon a base forty feet square. It consisted of three stories. The first was occupied by the men who moved the machine forward on rollers. The second was arranged as a drawbridge, which could be connected with the wall when needed. The uppermost was for use by soldiers, who by means of the drawbridge might drive the enemy from the wall. Like the *tumler*, the *helepolis* was protected from fire by wet skins.

One of these formidable machines was employed on both sides against the castle. At one side, the garrison fired burning pitch-besmeared arrows upon the monster, and tried to prevent the use of the drawbridge with long poles ; but a whole section of wall upon which they were standing gave way, and they were buried in the ruins. Some of the besiegers also were killed.

In the meantime Olgjerd arrived with a force of boyars and stationed them along the Vilia, his brother Kynstutt still occupying the heights. The latter had an interview with the Grand Master by arrangement. He hoped to intimidate him by threatening to join Olgjerd, and boasted that he could annihilate his army. The Grand Master offered him battle, but Kynstutt only pointed contemptuously to the

well-fortified camp of the Christians. He then offered to level the breastworks, but Kynstutt made no reply to him.

At last the Christians advanced for general assault, intending to take advantage of the numerous breaches in the wall. The Lithuanians, however, had erected strong barricades behind them, and the archers sent such a deadly shower of arrows into their ranks that they met with serious losses and had to fall back.

It was already the fourteenth day of the siege. The *tumler* was kept steadily at work making breaches in the walls, but the garrison as steadily erected new barricades. The *helepolis* was moved up to one of these breaches. The garrison greeted it with fiery arrows and hurled burning bunches of fagots upon it. The wet skins this time were of no avail. The flames mounted high, but while the occupants were seeking to make their escape the two managers of the machine seized the burning bunches, one by one, with hooks, and hurled them back, which fired the garrison's barricades and destroyed them before they could extinguish the flames. The burning machine was replaced by another. The attack upon it had just commenced when the wall suddenly began to waver. Those upon it had barely time

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## ❖ A LITHUANIAN CASTLE ❖

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to escape when it fell. The troops raised a triumphant shout and could not be prevented from rushing through the wide breach. The Grand Master ordered them back, but it was too late, and the passion of battle, which had become all the more furious as the news of this fresh success spread, could not be curbed. In an army composed of various nationalities each wanted the honor of being first to lead the way. The English contingent claimed it because they carried the standard of Saint George, but in all their wars with the heathen the Germans carried it also ; and as Duke Leopold of Austria was the most distinguished among the latter, the Grand Master assigned the leadership to him. As the Duke raised the sacred symbol, the gate which led out of the castle to the Vilia was suddenly opened, and a part of the garrison made a bold rush with the intention of cutting their way through. Leopold and his knights hurled themselves upon the desperate enemy. Arnold of Winkelried was one of the first to follow him. While engaged in a fearful hand to hand contest, Arnold noticed a Lithuanian furiously aiming a blow with his battle axe at the helmet of the princely standard-bearer. With lightning swiftness he swung his sword and clove the heathen's skull.

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## ❖ ARNOLD OF WINKELRIED ❖

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The Lithuanians were forced back and the massacre began. The infuriated heathen set fire to great piles of fagots smeared with pitch; the flames spread to the interior of the castle, and many Christians as well as heathen were burned to death. Blinded with rage, the combatants strove with each other in the fire and smoke, man with man. The Lithuanian pikes had little effect upon the mail of the knights, who swept everything before them with their swords, but battle axes found their way through the mail and many a fallen heathen was avenged. Mercilessly steel clashed against steel. Terrible scenes were enacted, but at last the banner of Saint George flew from the turret of the castle, announcing the victory of the Christians. Kynstutt and Olgjerd witnessed the assault from the neighboring heights, but made no effort to come to the help of the garrison; for during the battle a considerable force of the Grand Master's army was held in reserve to give the two brothers a hot reception if they advanced.

The Christian army celebrated its victory by singing the hymn, "Christ is Arisen," and closed with the chorale, "Let us all be joyous for the heathen have been punished." On the next day it was already Easter, and high mass was celebrated, at

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## ❖ A LITHUANIAN CASTLE ❖

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which the Bishop of Samland officiated. About two hundred Christians, among them seven brethren of the Order, were killed during the siege. Many a one of Leopold's army never returned home, but was buried in unconsecrated heathen soil. The Lithuanians lost two thousand men, some of whom were burned in the castle fire. The rest were taken prisoners, except Waydot, Kynstutt's son, who made his escape with thirty-six boyars. He embraced Christianity later and received the baptismal name of Henry, after which he went to the palace of the Emperor Charles the Fourth at Prague, where he was very kindly received, and remained many years. Before the army left Kauen the castle was completely demolished.

Duke Leopold wishing to thank the knight who had saved him from the axe of the murderous heathen, summoned all his men and requested the unknown knight to declare himself, but Arnold of Winkelried, caring little for princely favor, paid no attention to the Duke's request. He had saved the Duke's life, little dreaming that he himself would die a heroic death fighting against him at a later time. The Duke returned to his home filled with proud satisfaction at the victory, and Arnold was

no less satisfied. The song of victory, "Let us all be joyous," continually rang in his ears. He often recalled Father Vincentius's advice that man should devote the inestimable boon of life to good works as an offering to God. Since his own life had been preserved amid these terrible scenes by the divine goodness, he resolved to devote it henceforth to the service of humanity and the fatherland. Mail and sword might rust, but his purpose should be maintained; and when the fatherland needed him he would again seize his arms to fight in the ranks of the people, not as a murderous knight, but as a plain, dutiful citizen.

After Arnold's return to his native Stans he spent his days in managing his little property. Soon he married a gentle, lovely woman, who brought joy into his life and relieved his anxieties. In the course of the years beautiful children came to them; and the aforetime restless warrior found his greatest happiness in peaceful family life.

## *Chapter VIII*

### *The Beggar Monk*

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THE Emperor Charles the Fourth died in the year 1378 and was succeeded by his son Wenzel. Duke Leopold was made governor of Upper and Lower Swabia, which gave him great power among the nobles and the cities. The relations between the latter meanwhile had grown more and more strained. The attendants of the knights flocked to the cities in ever increasing numbers and were cordially welcomed. As their privileges continued to diminish, the knights organized against the cities, and Duke Leopold encouraged them in their action.

The Duke knew that the nobles were on his side to a man. He regarded it therefore as a favorable time to break up the League and restore the old authority of Austria. The warning voices of some well-meaning counsellors were stifled by the embittered nobles of Aargau and Thurgau and those aggrieved knights who had suffered so much at the hands of the League.

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## ❖ ARNOLD OF WINKELRIED ❖

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In June, 1386, Duke Leopold went to Baden, where he was assembling an army of knights. Besides his own vassals, knights came from adjoining countries with their horsemen, as well as the Margrave of Baden and the counts of Württemberg. The army was nine thousand strong, including a large contingent of foot soldiers. The League naturally armed its followers and barricaded the cities. Zurich was the first point threatened. It was only a few miles from Baden and was the bulwark of the League. Its people soon learned that the Baron of Bonstetten, one of the ablest of the Austrian generals, was advancing against the city to lay siege to it. Although Zurich at that time was supplied with good walls and gates, it had not sufficient fighting men to withstand a siege any great length of time, and so had to send to the Four Forest Cantons for help. As soon as the request was received fourteen hundred men were sent. Rather than remain in idleness the League's auxiliaries undertook expeditions into Kiburg and Thurgau and captured supplies in these unfriendly places, which would be needed during the siege.

Not far from Zurich and a little off the road leading to Baden, there was a wretched inn which served



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## ❖ THE BEGGAR MONK ❖

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as a lodging house for all kinds of lawless adventurers and a rendezvous for the robber knights of the neighborhood. On the night of June third, during a fearful thunder storm which had raged for hours, there was a knock upon its rickety window. The hostess, an ill-favored old woman, opened the door and found two knights dismounting from their horses.

"Put our steeds in your stable, Mother Ruschen, and give them some fodder," said one of them, addressing her familiarly. He and his companion then entered the apartment, whose entire furnishings consisted of a few wooden tables and benches, and shelves upon which were filthy bottles and glasses. The two newcomers were our old acquaintances, Jörgel of Reisenstein and Conrad of Waltihof.

"He has not come yet," said the latter, glancing around the miserable place which was so dimly lighted by a half burned candle that only objects close at hand could be discerned. "I begin to think we have come too late."

"This beastly storm may have detained him, as it did us," said Jörgel.

"No storm could stop him, even if it rained rocks and poured down fire from the sky," replied

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❖ ARNOLD OF WINKELRIED ❖

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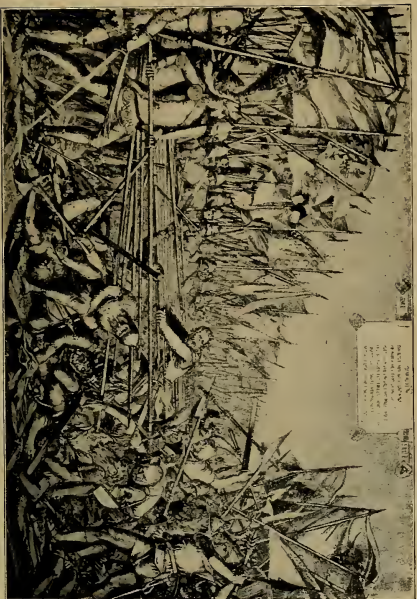
Conrad. "I am afraid he was angry at our delay and has gone on his way home alone."

"Mother Ruschen," said Jörgel to the old woman, who had just come in, "has the Mörsperger been here?" She replied in the negative. "Then bring us some wine, the best you have," said Jörgel.

"And the dice," added Conrad.

The old woman set a bottle of wine and two glasses on the table at which her guests were seated, and brought the dice; whereupon the two began playing and soon forgot everything else, while the old woman, as was her usual practice, sat by the fireplace and dozed. Suddenly she awoke. The quarrelling of the two players, and their shouts of exultation or curses, as one lost and the other won, had not disturbed her in the least, but the tramp of horses outside, which the excited players had not noticed, the old woman heard plainly. She arose and notified them that the man they were expecting had come. She then left the room, found Veit and his attendants just dismounting, and informed him his friends were waiting for him.

"Good," said Veit. "I cannot stay long with you this time. Just give the horses a bundle of hay; and a good stout drink to the men."



# *WINKELRIED'S heroic death at the Battle of Sempach*

(From a painting by Karl Jaulin)



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## ❖ THE BEGGAR MONK ❖

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As the men were leading the horses to the stable the old woman noticed that one of them was very lame. Veit went inside and was greeted by both the young men. They were still under the excitement of play and prepared to resume it.

"Put up your dice," exclaimed Veit, harshly. "A pest upon it! Do you not know I have come straight from Baden, and that, too, on matters of importance, and here you two fools are courting the wench Fortune? I am bringing great news."

The two laid aside the dice. Veit sat down on the bench and replied to their questioning glances: "The day after to-morrow we must join the army." The news did not seem to surprise either of them. Jörgel, indeed, said with a yawn, "It's an infernally doubtful pleasure, this going to Zurich!"

"There is nothing in it for us," said Conrad.

"Blockheads!" said Veit, with a twinkle in his eye. Then he resumed in a lower tone: "The siege is only a sham manœuvre, if you must know. Bonstetter's plan is simply to keep the Zurichers busy and to decoy the Waldstätters, who have been running all over Kiburg and Thurgau, back into the city."

Jörgel and Conrad looked at each other. "And the Duke?" they asked, in one voice.

“Wait! Here is the real business,” said Veit. “With the large part of the army and the flower of the nobles, among whom we shall be, the Duke will secretly and quietly march past Wellingen and Bremgarten to Sempach, on the left bank of the Reuss, and afterwards advance upon Lucerne, to give the burghers a needed chastising, and set the League a terrible example. He will deal lightly with the peasant rabble, but Zurich will have to make the best bargain it can.”

“We will be there,” exclaimed Jörgel.

“A masterpiece of generalship,” said Conrad.

“Pst!” warned Veit, for the old woman was returning. She was about to provide them with wine, but Veit beckoned to her and said: “We have no wish for a carousal this time, Mother Ruschen. I will quench my thirst with a good drink from my own cellar, and don’t care to spoil the taste of it now.” Turning to his companions, he added: “You shall be my guests to-night. We must leave for home to-morrow at an early hour. We will make preparations for a little ride; it is bad luck that I cannot ride the black horse. The beast went suddenly lame, and that is why I wait here so long. It must have been bewitched.”

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## ❖ THE BEGGAR MONK ❖

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"Yes, yes!" said Jörgel, "I have no doubt witchery is back of it. I wonder who could have done it!"

"What is bewitched once is likely to be bewitched again," said Conrad.

"That is what is troubling me," said the knight.

"Why not depend upon the church's ban and consult your chaplain? The priests understand this witchery business."

"To be sure! I never thought of that," said the old woman, who had listened to the conversation. "I know a pious father who can help your horse, noble sir."

"Where is he?" all three exclaimed together.

Mother Ruschen pointed to a dark corner of the room. They went there and found a figure stretched out on the bench apparently sound asleep.

"Ho! wake up, reverend father," cried the old woman, shaking him roughly. As he raised himself and looked up, the knights forgot all about the horse, and with furious execrations dragged him to his feet. His face was half hidden in a cowl.

"Who are you? and how did you come here?" thundered Veit.

"You ought to know who I am by my attire,"

was the quiet answer. "I belong to the Dominican beggar order, and wander round seeking alms for the poor. The storm overtook me and I came to this place and found shelter by chance."

"We have had bad luck with our secrets lately," said Veit, with a significant glance at his companions.

"Why should we care whether he lay there with open ears, or slept like a marmot?" said Jörgel.

"We will not let this one off with an oath," said Conrad, gesticulating furiously.

"No, that will not do this time," said Veit, grimly. With that he tore off the monk's cowl and looked him sharply in the face. "I think I have seen this pious man before. I cannot tell where or when. It may have been some time ago, but we have met before, and it could not have been a very pleasant meeting, I fancy, from the effect your face has upon me. Nevertheless, good father, you must go along with us. As foresight is the parent of wisdom, I will find a safe and cosy place for you in my castle, where you can remain until the storm of war has subsided and Duke Leopold is once more established in the land which rightfully belongs to him. Pray fervently that it may be soon accomplished,



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## ❖ THE BEGGAR MONK ❖

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for you will not see the sun again until it is. You understand me."

During these words the monk, who was tall and powerful, quickly glanced at the speaker and his companions and assumed an air of defiance. A wild gleam of wrath shot from his eyes, and he appeared as if about to attack them; but prudence prevailed, for the struggle would have been too uneven. He offered no resistance when they took him from the house. The horses were brought out and mounted. Veit rode ahead and the monk between the other two. The attendants brought up the rear, leading the lame horse slowly along.

The storm had ceased, but the sky was still overcast with dark clouds. Two hours later they reached castle Mörsperg and entered by a drawbridge lowered across a deep moat. The keep was below the watchtower, and an opening with a grated door, which also served as window, led into it. The monk was placed in this dungeon without further ado, and the robber knights betook themselves to the principal castle apartment, where the lady of Mörsperg had spread a repast of roasted venison.

Greatly as Veit was feared on the highroads, and careful as his best friends were not to anger him,

this barbarian was little respected in his own castle. His energetic spouse managed things there to suit herself. Of late he had been forced to submit humbly to her strong sceptre. He was under the minor ban of the Church for his evil doings. The bishop had kept him subject to it for three years; and the noble lady, who sought to make reparation for his wickedness by her own piety, suffered even more than if she had been under the ban herself, for the chaplain who used to perform service there came no longer. Since that had happened, Veit hardly dared look his wife in the face and meet her injured, reproachful expression. He had also felt her displeasure in other ways. He was restrained in eating and drinking when guests were at the castle, and she strictly forbade dicing. But to-day the mistress's flinty heart apparently relented. She lavished the best wine in the cellar upon the guests, and even brought the dice for them. The astonished husband attributed this change to his approaching departure, but there was an entirely different reason for it.

The noble lady had heard of the monk's imprisonment from the servants. She could not endure such an indignity to a servant of the Church. She was not actuated by piety so much as by the fear

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## ❖ THE BEGGAR MONK ❖

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that the ban would be prolonged by this new outrage, should it become known. She had played the part of a generous housewife only to divert the attention of her husband, and as soon as Veit and his companions were absorbed in gormandizing, she took a huge bunch of keys and hastened to the dungeon.

The monk had heard of the ban resting upon the castle, and when the lady implored him to celebrate mass and hear confession, from which she had already been barred a year and a day, he became embarrassed. "I dare not violate the stern decree of the Church. You know you have no right to ask for any of its sacred offices, and I have no right to perform them," was his answer.

"Can I not enter the chapel just once, for brief devotion? It would not be wrong for you to pray for me. I can set you free, and it shall be done this very night if you will not refuse me this consolation. The attendant who keeps the watch is a pious soul, and is entirely devoted and obedient to me. At my command he will open the gate and let down the bridge for you."

At these words the monk's scruples vanished, for great results depended upon his speedy release. He

gladly followed her into the desolate little chapel, which was directly over the dungeon. Half an hour later he breathed the air of freedom and was greeted by the morning star in a cloudless sky. With flying steps he rushed back over the same course he had come, past Mother Ruschen's wretched inn, and thence through a narrow pass to the highroad which led to Zurich. It was broad daylight when the monk entered the city, but without stopping to rest, he hastened to the shop of Florian Habli, the smith.

"Why, Arnold!" exclaimed Florian, in surprise at the sudden appearance of the supposed monk. "I have been very anxious about you," he added. "God be praised that you are safe back from your daring journey. I did not expect you so soon."

"I have not been far," replied Arnold. "A thunder storm drove me to an inn on the way, and there I learned all the plans of the Duke without the trouble of going to Baden. I have been very fortunate. I will tell you the rest another time. Now procure me a fast steed while I take off this mummary and leave it with you. I must summon all our people back from Thurgau. Every hour's delay is dangerous. The fate of the League hangs upon a hair."

## Chapter IX

### *Winkelried's Heroic Death*

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**O**N the eighth of July, Duke Leopold appeared before the little city of Sempach with fourteen hundred knights and horsemen and several thousand foot-soldiers. He pitched his camp at the edge of a forest on a height facing the city. Before subduing Lucerne, he had resolved to teach Sempach a terrible lesson and punish it for its rebellious spirit. For use in the forthcoming attack he had brought with him huge machines, the first to throw heavy missiles. Partly to find a place where they could be set up, and partly to cut off the supplies of the besieged, he sent his infantry to drive off the peasants, after compelling them to cut their ripening corn. The nobles took great delight in mistreating the harvesters and jeering at the besieged. Veit of Mörsperg would ride up to the walls and contemptuously order them to bring out breakfast for the harvesters; and Jörgel would point to the loaded wagons, with the threat that all of them should be hanged.

How those in Thurgau learned Duke Leopold's plans, is no secret to the reader. They quickly left for their menaced homes, marched day and night, and on the way were assured of the good-will of Zug, Glarus, and other places. On the morning of July ninth they reached a wood, called the Meierholz, and there occupied a strong position. Just as Duke Leopold had issued orders for the attack upon Sempach to begin in earnest, he was surprised by the news of the arrival of the Confederates, whom he supposed to be far away from there. He called a council of war to decide whether battle should be given at once or be deferred. The older and more experienced knights, who knew the courage and iron resolution of the Confederates, voted for the latter plan, and advised the Duke first of all to get into communication with Bonstetten's division. The young hot-heads outvoted them, however, and the Duke made the fatal decision to give battle at once. He took up his position on a piece of meadow land, gently sloping toward Sempach. At the request of those knights who were so certain of victory, and who wanted to secure the honor of the day for themselves alone, the foot-soldiers were placed in the rear near the baggage trains. The larger part of the

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## ❖ WINKELRIED'S DEATH ❖

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horsemen were formed in three divisions, and as each came into action they were to dismount and fight on foot. The first of these divisions was formed in a square, twenty or thirty ranks deep, and armed with harpoon-shaped spears, about five metres in length, so arranged that one overlapped the next, thus apparently making the square impenetrable.

It was now midday. The sun beat fiercely down upon the heavily armored knights. Some in the middle ranks fainted; some died from suffocation. In all other ways the Austrian position was advantageous, for they occupied the higher point and could hurl themselves down upon the enemy. The Confederates, fearing the arrival of Bonstetten, rested a brief spell in the Meierholz and then advanced for immediate attack. They were between fifteen and sixteen hundred strong and were armed with swords, pikes, and halberds. Their leader, Schultheiss of Gundoldingen, formed them in wedge shape, the point toward the enemy. In this order they fell upon their knees and implored divine help. The haughty knights, supposing that they were begging for mercy, taunted them. They soon discovered their mistake, for hardly had they risen to their feet,

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## ❖ ARNOLD OF WINKELRIED ❖

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before they rushed forward with a mighty shout and the fearful blasts of their battle-horns. The Lucerners formed the point of the wedge and attempted to force a way through the enemy, but the Austrians stood as immovable as a wall, helm to helm, mail to mail, shield to shield, and between the shields a forest of spears, which resisted the attack. The Urners next advanced. "Break down their spears; they are hollow!" shouted their leader; but the broken spears were replaced by those behind them, and the Urners gave way as the Lucerners had done. The brave Schwyzers fared no better, and in falling back suffered severe loss from the showers of arrows shot at them from behind hedges and bushes.

The knights felt sure of victory, and the Confederates were losing confidence. More than sixty of their bravest, among them their leader, were lying dead on the field; the knights had not yet lost a man, and their position remained unbroken. Every one in the Confederate ranks realized that it was a critical moment, and none more fully than Arnold of Winkelried, who led the men of the Nidwald. A decision must be made instantly, or Confederate blood would be uselessly shed and the fruits of the glorious victory of Morgarten would be wasted.



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## ❖ WINKELRIED'S DEATH ❖

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Thus thought Arnold, and he made the decision at once. There are things more important than life. He had not shrunk from the poisonous breath of the plague. He had looked death in the face countless times in foreign wars. The time had now come for him to offer himself up for freedom and the fatherland.

“Brethren in arms!” he loudly shouted, “care for my wife and children. I will open a path for you. Follow me.”

With inevitable death before him he dashed forward, threw himself upon the enemy's lances, and bent them down to the earth by the weight of his body. Pierced and gashed in every limb, he yielded up his heroic soul. His followers rushed into the gap and slashed right and left with their swords and halberds. In vain the knights attempted to close up, for other Confederates were constantly widening the gap. Strokes fell thick and fast; helmets and heads were split at a blow, and the victims fell and were trodden underfoot. Amidst this terrible slaughter the Confederates' wedge steadily forced its way deeper and deeper into the square. It was soon in confusion. The victors forced their way through to the enemy's standard. The Urners captured the

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## ❖ ARNOLD OF WINKELRIED ❖

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Hapsburg lions; and the Lucerners, the standards of Alsace and Tyrol. As the Austrian standard-bearer fell, the standard was seized by Ulrich of Aarburg, who defended it with his life. "Austria to the rescue!" were his last words, as he fell bleeding from many wounds. The words reached the ear of Leopold, who was in command of the second division. No one could restrain him from plunging into the thick of the fight. "Better die with honor than live in dishonor," he replied to those who were entreating him to save himself. He rushed forward, seized the blood-sprinkled banner and waved it high in air as the slaughter went on around him. In the midst of it he fell dead.

When the knights saw their leader fall, they gave up all hope and rushed, panic-stricken, to their horses; but their attendants had already mounted them and fled. The third division was not in the battle, and had made its escape when it realized all was lost. The foot-soldiers were driven in every direction by the Confederates. Thus was the great battle fought by the little army of the Four Cantons against this strong army of knights and nobles.

The battle had lasted all day, and the Confederates

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## ❖ WINKELRIED'S DEATH ❖

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were too exhausted to pursue the defeated enemy. After kneeling on the field and giving thanks for the victory, they took possession of the enemy's camp. Splendid arms and equipments fell into their hands, as well as eighteen standards. Victors and vanquished lost famous warriors, and among them nearly all their leaders. One hundred and twenty of the Confederates were killed, but the Austrian loss was much heavier, nearly two thousand having been slain. Besides Duke Leopold, three hundred and fifty princes, counts, great barons, and nobles had fallen, among them the Margrave of Baden-Hochberg, the count palatine of Würtemberg and Teck, and the counts of Hohenzollern, Fürstenberg, Aarberg, Schwartzenberg, and Thierstein. Several noble families were almost wiped out.

Following the old practice, the victors remained three days upon the field. The third day was devoted to the burial of the dead. Duke Leopold and twenty-seven knights and nobles were interred in the Church of the monastery of Königsfeld in Aargau. The bodies of other nobles were removed to their homes, and the rest of the dead were buried in a great trench.

A simple chapel was erected on the spot where

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## ❖ ARNOLD OF WINKELRIED ❖

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Leopold's body was found, which was dedicated July fifth, 1387. The titles and coats-of-arms of the nobles were placed upon the walls. In the centre stood a cross between two memorials, one representing Duke Leopold, the other the Lucerne leader, both in the act of prayer. A picture over the door commemorated Winkelried's deed.

Hans Halbfutter of Lucerne, an eye-witness of the battle of Sempach, commemorated the victory in a poem, wherein Arnold of Winkelried's heroic death is described. In the learned world it is still questioned whether he performed this deed; some historians have even denied the existence of William Tell and relegated him to the realm of legend. But the name of Arnold of Winkelried, the savior of his fatherland, still lives in the hearts of the Swiss people. A statue has been erected near the fountain in the market place of Stans which represents him at the moment of grasping the enemy's spears. His birthplace and coat of mail are also shown in Stans, and a chapel has been erected to his memory.

On the ninth of July, 1886, five hundred years after the battle of Sempach, the Swiss held a national festival in honor of Arnold of Winkelried, the

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## ❖ WINKELRIED'S DEATH ❖

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hero who exhibited a manly courage, self-devotion, and love of fatherland which secured the victory of the Confederates over their strongest enemy, and raised Switzerland to the position of a powerful Commonwealth.

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# Appendix

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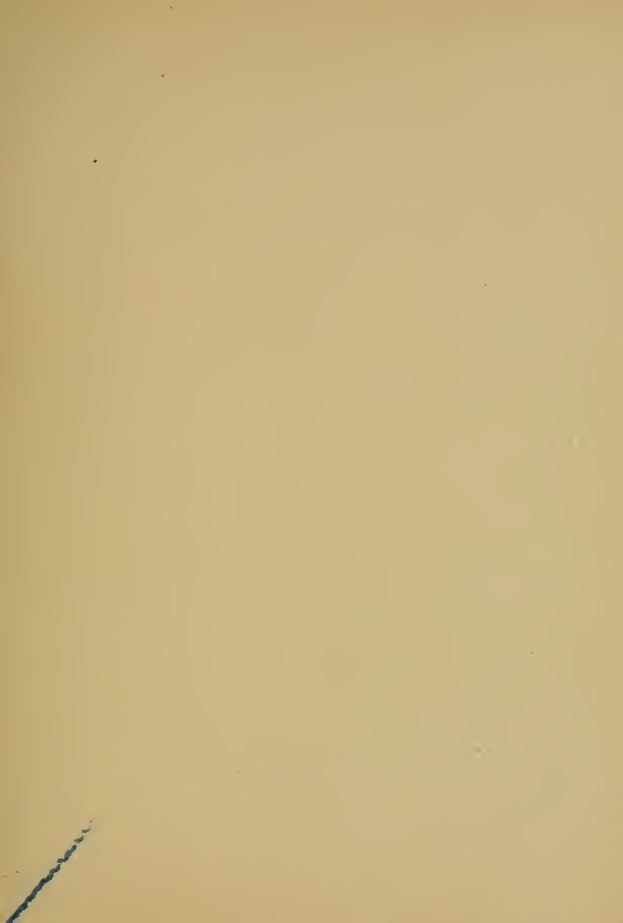
THE following is a chronological statement of the principal events in Swiss-Austrian history connected with this narrative :

- 1273 Rudolph elected Emperor.
- 1291 Rudolph's death.
- 1291 Formation of the Everlasting League.
- 1292 Adolph elected Emperor.
- 1298 Albert of Hapsburg elected Emperor.
- 1308 Murder of Alfred.
- 1308 Henry of Luxemburg elected Emperor.
- 1313 Death of Henry.
- 1315 Austrian defeat at Morgarten.
- 1315 Everlasting League renewed.
- 1336 Civic War at Zurich.
- 1336 Rudolph Brun made burgomaster of Zurich.
- 1351 Everlasting League enlarged.
- 1386 Austrian defeat at Sempach.
- 1386 Death of Winkelried.
- 1389 The Seven Years' peace.



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